

Young Klondike

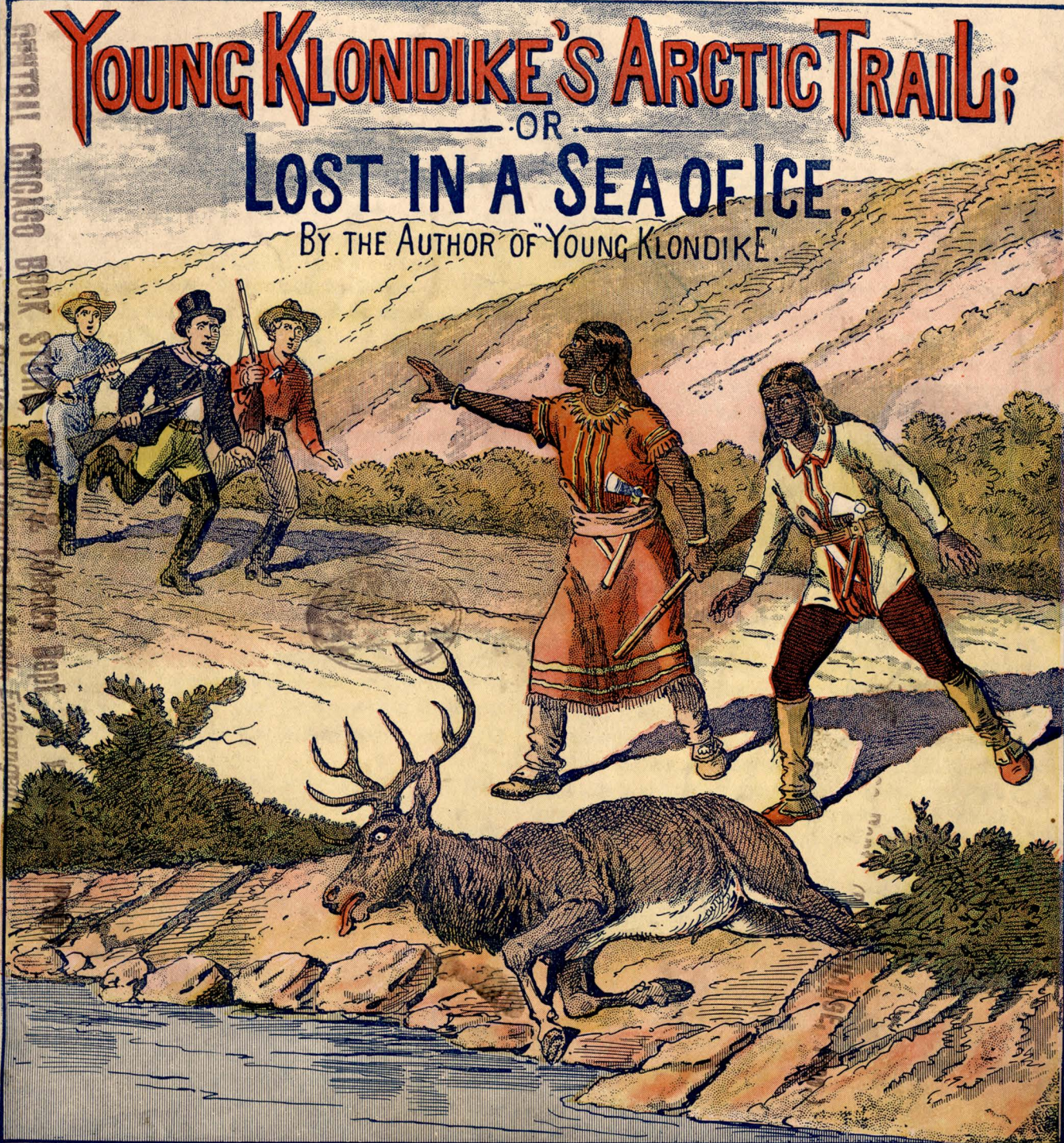
STORIES OF A GOLD SEEKER.

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YOUNG KLONDIKE.

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Young Klondike's Arctic Trail;

OR,

LOST IN A SEA OF ICE.

BY AUTHOR OF YOUNG KLONDIKE.

CHAPTER I.

PROSPECTING ON BONANZA CREEK.

PROBABLY no more fascinating business is known to man than prospecting for gold.

It is all a lottery. You may strike it rich the first day, or you may work weeks and strike nothing.

Plenty of patience, lots of perseverance and an utter indifference to surrounding circumstances are the qualifications which make a good prospector, and yet in the wonderful Klondike country where so many millions in nuggets and dust have been wrested from the embrace of the frozen soil, there are thousands who possess all the patience and perseverance imaginable and yet have never struck it rich and very likely never will.

But there are others—others who have made their millions on the Klondike and are making them still.

One pleasant afternoon late in the month of May four persons might have been seen working their way up the world-famous Bonanza Creek, in a pretty aphtha launch.

Two were stalwart young fellows, full of intelligence and clear grit, the third was a young girl of some nineteen years, and the fourth a short, elderly man, rather stout, but exceedingly active in all his movements.

He wore big army boots and a battered plug hat, and at the time we first call attention to him was engaged in steering the boat and staring around at the surrounding mountains, apparently looking for something which he did not see.

If the occupants of the launch had been in Dawson City they would have attracted general attention, for this was the famous firm of Golden & Luckey, who were reputed to have taken out more gold on the Klondike than any other four persons who ever came to that desolate region.

One was the celebrated Ned Golden, better known among the miners as Young Klondike, his companion was Dick Luckey, and the young lady was Miss Edith Welton, a San Francisco girl, with whom Ned and Dick fell in on their way to Alaska, rescuing her from a wrecked steamer, while the little man with the big boots professed to be a detective out in the Klondike country searching for a mysterious criminal.

A detective he certainly had been, but he was a miner now and he was known far and wide as the Unknown, rather a singular fact, arising from the fact that for some mysterious reason he would tell his name to nobody. Even his partners knew him by no other name than Zed.

Explanations first and have done with them—that's the principle on which we have gone this time, for what is once told won't have to be told over again. We may as well make a clean job of it by adding that Ned and Dick left New York a couple of poor clerks and were now worth their millions. Edith, failing to find her father at Dawson City, as she had expected to do, had shared their fortunes good and bad, and was now worth as much as either of them, and the same may be said for the Unknown, who had come in for his share of every find.

"One would think," remarked the detective, tilting his tall hat further back on his head, "that we had enough already without starting out on a prospecting tour so late in the season, but there's no satisfying Young Klondike, that's one thing."

"Ridiculous," replied Ned. "What's the use of setting me up as being over greedy for gold?"

"We're all in it," said Dick.

"We are all dead in love with this life of adventure," added Edith, "and I think we can safely say that except for the satisfaction of succeeding, we don't

care a rap whether we strike it rich or not this trip. Anyhow, I know that's the case with me."

"It certainly is with me," said Ned. "We've got all we want, but for my part I'm dead in love with prospecting and can't sit idle. We started out to prospect up here at the headwaters of Bonanza Creek, and we are doing it—that's all."

"Yes, I'm doing it now," chuckled the little detective, turning his head from one side to the other. "I'm taking in everything, but by the Jumping Jeremiah! I don't see a square inch of flatland anywhere, and as to prospecting on the sides of these infernal mountains, I ain't in it—I tell you that flat!"

"Hello!" cried Dick, suddenly. "Speaking of flat, there's one right ahead of us now."

"Hanged if there isn't!" added Ned, looking forward.

There was something exciting in working in a new and only partially explored region.

Our prospectors were up among the mountains of the Indian River range, a country very little known.

True they had been here before—there were few places in the Klondike region where they had not been—but they had never started to explore it with a view of doing any actual gold digging until now.

And they were in good shape for it. Everything in the way of mining tools and provisions that money could buy were securely packed in a boat in tow of the launch.

Young Klondike's means were unlimited, and he proposed to put in several weeks up here in the Indian country.

If he succeeded in locating rich diggings, as he hoped to do, it was his intention to take possession of a large tract of land, divide it into claims and sell them out to the tenderfeet, as new-comers on the Klondike are called.

"I should think that might do for a starter, Dick," he remarked, as they drew nearer to the strip of flat land to which their attention had been directed by Dick Luckey. "Anyhow, the day is pretty well advanced; suppose we make a landing there and tie up for the night. It won't do us any harm to have a look around."

Thus saying Ned directed the launch into a little cove where a small stream emptied into Bonanza Creek.

The first view of the place was certainly encouraging.

Here the mountains set back from the creek for a distance of perhaps a thousand feet, leaving a stretch of several hundred acres of flat land between the rise of the rocks and the water.

Through this stretch the stream which came rushing down the mountain side made its way into the creek, and certainly no better place for gold hunting could be asked for. On the Klondike, as elsewhere, it is on such flat stretches that gold is most often found in paying quantities, and there was no one better aware of this than Young Klondike and his friends.

"I should say that this was first rate," remarked the Unknown, looking about. "Dick, you're genius, and your very name is lucky. If we fail to make a ten strike here, I shall miss my guess."

"We can only try it," said Edith. "Suppose we get the tent up and I'll fix you up the best dinner you ever had. If we are going to stay here a few days, we may as well make ourselves comfortable at the start."

"Ye gods and little fishes, that's a proposition I fully agree with," exclaimed the detective, "and to the same token there's fresh meat for us now! Look!"

"A caribou, by gracious!" cried Ned, seizing his rifle.

Close up to the rise of the rocks the animal had suddenly made its appearance, coming out from a clump of trees.

It bent its head to drink from the stream, and at a moment Young Klondike would have blazed away if the Unknown had not suddenly seized his arm.

"Hold on there! Hold on! We want that!" he exclaimed. "Let Edith fire!"

"Which is as much as to say that our chance of getting it goes for little if I do the shooting?" said Ned, lowering his rifle. "Well, perhaps you're right. Edith is certainly the best shot on the Klondike. I'll take a back seat."

"A caribou is not so easy to hit," said Edith, "but I think Ned could hit this one all right."

"While you stop to talk our chances are growing beautifully less," declared the detective. "Go ahead, my dear, we want the caribou. Do the job up in your usual style."

It was certainly no exaggeration to call Edith the best shot on the Klondike.

She was, in fact, a splendid shot; she could take a bird on the wing and never miss, stalk a deer or kill a moose at long range, all of which she had learned in California long before she came to Alaska, and the brave girl was now about to give an exhibition of her skill.

She raised her rifle, sighted the caribou, and let fly.

The animal made one spring back from the stream, half rose on its hind legs, and fell forward quite dead.

"Job done," said the Unknown, darting forward. "All that now remains is to collar the game."

Ned and Dick joined him and they hurried toward the spot where the caribou had fallen.

Before they had covered half the distance two Indians sprang out from among the trees.

"How! How!" shouted one, waving them back. "White boys no take! How! How!"

They seized the caribou between them and ran back among the trees.

"Thunder! I don't like this!" cried Dick, and up went his rifle, but Ned and the Unknown both called out not to fire.

"Let them have it! Let them go!" said Young

Klondike. "It won't pay at all to kill one of those fellows. If we do, it will be nothing but an Indian fight all the rest of the trip."

"That's what's the matter," declared Ned. "Let them have the old caribou, Dick."

"Yes, let them have it. I've no doubt it's as tough as leather," chuckled the Unknown.

They waited a moment, half expecting to see the Indians reappear, but they did not show themselves again.

"What's the matter? What are you stopping for?" called out Edith, who had not observed the Indians.

They went back and told what had occurred, and the remaining hours of that day were somewhat anxious ones.

All hands fully expected an attack from the Indians, and a careful watch was kept all night, Ned, Dick and the Unknown taking turns.

None came, however.

The lengthening night passed away and found the little camp on Bonanza undisturbed.

Now it may seem strange that Young Klondike's party should have remained in so dangerous a spot.

This is easily understood when we mention that any other place they could have gone to would have been equally dangerous.

As a rule the Indians make little trouble along the line of the Yukon River and the Klondike; but away up here at the headwaters of Bonanza Creek they are not used to the whites, and have no desire to get used to them.

On the other hand Young Klondike and his party were well used to Indian fighting and quite able to take care of themselves.

So they pitched their tent there by the stream and passed no more uncomfortable a night than they would have done if the Indians had not shown themselves.

When morning found them still secure they gave up thinking about the matter and prepared to go to work and dig for gold.

"Shall we take it by the stream or along the line of the creek?" asked Dick, after breakfast. "All I'm after is the best place, of course."

"Which is all any of us are after," said Ned. "I should say that the bank of the stream was the best location of the two."

"Then the bank of the stream let it be," said Dick. "I'll mark out the shaft hole. I suppose we've got to burn out the frost here same as everywhere else?"

Now, instead of quoting the conversation which followed, let us indulge in a little mining talk by way of explanation, so that the reader may understand just what mining in the Klondike means.

Up in Alaska the frost never comes out of the ground, the heat of the short summer being insufficient to thaw the frozen earth.

This condition of things prevails almost everywhere, and in order to reach the gold deposit, which as a rule lies at a depth of about twenty feet, it is necessary

to build huge fires and shovel mud until the frost limit is passed.

Thus prospecting at the start is slow work, and much patience is required.

Young Klondike and his friends were well used to all this. No one understood the business better, and they went about it in this instance in the usual way.

The first day was entirely consumed in dragging wood to the spot chosen.

There was plenty to be had at the foot of the mountain, and before night fell upon them again an immense pile of dry brush and logs had been collected.

During the day they were here, there, and everywhere along the base of the mountains, but nothing of the Indians was seen.

Immediately after supper the boys and the Unknown proceeded to lay the fire, which was to be allowed to burn all night, fed by whoever happened to be on guard.

Ned took his turn first, Dick and the Unknown rolling themselves up in their blankets about nine o'clock, at which time Edith retired to her separate tent, not to be disturbed until morning, unless something unusual occurred.

For an hour or more the big pile of burning brushwood sent a dense column of smoke skyward, and then began to die down.

Ned, who had been sitting by the creek watching the coming stars, for darkness was now gathering, arose and walked over to the fire to put on more wood.

He had almost reached it when he saw a tall Indian wearing a bear skin flung over his shoulders suddenly rise up from behind the fire.

"Ugh! Ugh!" he grunted, raising a fine rifle and covering Ned. "Stand still, white boy! Stand still!"

CHAPTER II.

THE BEGINNING OF THE BIG STORM.

It was not yet quite dark, and the fire's light made everything as bright as day about the camp, so Young Klondike had no difficulty in seeing his savage foe.

He stood perfectly still, for to attempt resistance under the circumstances would have been the merest folly. Perhaps he might have shot the Indian, but if he happened to miss then trouble would surely come, for Ned knew well enough that the big buck could not be alone.

"What do you want?" he called out. "If it's bread I'll give it to you. I'm the red man's friend."

"Ugh! Ugh!" grunted the Indian, not lowering his rifle. "Yes, me want bread. Come here, white boy, me talkee—talkee heap talk. Come, me no shoot now."

"Put down your rifle then," said Ned. "See, I've put down mine."

"Ugh! Ugh! Come on! Me no shoot. Come, white boy, no be afraid!"

Now the last thing Ned wished to do was to show fear in a case like this.

He rather prided himself on his way of dealing with the Indians, and he had made many friends among them; so he walked boldly on toward the fire, only to learn too late that he was making a mistake.

All at once two big bucks rose up alongside of him, and before he had time to realize what was happening, Young Klondike found himself a prisoner in their hands.

It was useless to struggle, for the grip of the Indians was like iron. Ned's Winchester was wrenched away from him, and when the buck who had first appeared came running up laughing, he found an easy subject to tie hand and foot, which he promptly did.

Ned was terribly chagrined, and naturally not a little frightened.

The Indians kept perfect silence and so did he, for it would have done no good whatever to talk.

A moment later and he had no chance to talk, even if he wanted to, for the big buck stuffed his mouth full of paper.

Then they rolled him over so close to the fire that it almost singed his clothes, and with a grunt and a laugh walked away.

Poor Ned struggled and kicked, did everything he could to free himself, but it was all no use.

A prisoner he was and a prisoner he was likely to remain until the Indians chose to set him free.

For ten minutes and more he lay there in a state of mind which was anything but pleasant, and at the end of that time had the satisfaction, if it could be so called, of seeing the Indians go.

They were only a gang of thieves it seemed, for they made no effort to attack the sleepers in the tents.

Ned saw them hurry off to the woods loaded down with provisions, and such tools as they took a fancy to.

The rifles all went, of course.

So stealthily did they work that neither Dick, Edith or the Unknown were aroused.

"Good-by, white boy! Good-by!" they sung out, as they walked off with the pick of the valuables of the camp.

Ned could hear them laughing and chuckling, and he struggled harder than ever to free himself, but he did not succeed any better than before, and did not get free until half an hour later, when he saw the Unknown come out of the tent sleepily rubbing his eyes.

"Hello, Young Klondike! Hello!" he called out. "Where are you? Hey! Hello!"

Of course Ned was in no shape to answer, and could only wait for the Unknown to come to him, which he presently did.

"Ned! Hello! Upon my word! By the Jump-

ing Jeremiah! what does all this mean?" exclaimed the astonished detective, catching sight of Young Klondike as he lay there a prisoner by the fire.

Ned could only answer with his eyes, until the Unknown jumped in and set him free, when, of course he lost no time telling his story.

"And you allowed yourself to be captured by a lot of thieving Indians!" exclaimed the detective. "You Well, well! I never should have thought of such a thing!"

"I'm ashamed of it—thoroughly ashamed of it!" said Ned. "I haven't a word to say."

"Is everything gone?"

"Blest if I know! They carried away a lot. Why didn't you wake up? You must have slept awful sound to let them take the rifles out of the tent."

"Well, I guess I must. By the Jumping Jeremiah! I'm only too relieved to think they didn't scalp us or carry away Edith. Don't say a word, Young Klondike; we've got to get square for this."

Of course fears for the safety of his friends had been the first thing that troubled Young Klondike, but that was relieved by the Unknown, who reported Dick all right, and ran into the tent to have a look at Edith before a word was said.

It was a bitter experience for the little camp on Bonanza Creek, but still there was no thought of moving away to another location.

Dick was awakened and a council of war held, but Edith was not disturbed until morning. When at last she heard the story, it had been decided to remain just where they were.

It wouldn't do them any good to go away, for they were liable to run into the same thing anywhere they might locate, and after all these Indians were only thieves.

"Let's keep right along as though nothing had happened," said Dick. "We've got provisions enough left for a week and the best of the mining tools are with us still."

"I'll go out on the scout and locate the camp of those fellows," declared the Unknown. "I don't despair at all of getting some of the stuff back."

Ned and Dick laughed heartily at this, for with the Unknown it was anything to get rid of doing mining work, which he hated with all his soul.

He was off for the mountains shortly after breakfast, leaving Ned and Dick to continue the work alone.

Not all alone either, for Edith helped them, and Edith was as good as any man at mining.

First they cleared away the remains of the fire and started in digging.

Three feet was all they were able to sink the shaft before they struck the frost again.

Then another fire had to be built. This was allowed to burn for two hours and then the ashes were cleared away and the digging resumed.

This time they only got down eighteen inches, but by alternating between burning and digging they

sunk the shaft about eight feet through the loamy soil by the end of the day.

"A good day's work," remarked Dick, as he and Ned were washing up in the creek for supper. "I don't believe we would have done a bit better if the Unknown had been here."

"I doubt if we should, either," replied Ned. "There would have been more talk and less work—that's all."

"I wish he would come back, though," called Edith, from the tent. "I must say I don't much like the idea of being here without him to-night."

It was the first allusion which had been made to the affair of the night before, and yet all day long they had been in danger of an attack by the Indians, and not a rifle to defend themselves with. It was true they had their revolvers, but those would not have amounted to much at long range.

"Worst of it is it's going to storm, and I wouldn't wonder if it turned out a big one," said Dick, looking up at the darkened sky.

Now, a storm in May in the Klondike country may or may not prove a serious matter, for it is liable to be either rain or snow.

"It would probably put an end to the prospecting for some time if this storm turned out to be snow," Ned declared.

"We won't fret about it," said Dick. "It may not be anything worse than a big rain fall."

"Which will fill up our prospect hole and leave us high and dry for a couple of days."

"High and dry above a shaft full of water," laughed Dick. "Upon my word that's pretty good."

They sat down to supper. It grew more and more overcast and the wind began to blow up the valley, sighing mournfully among the trees at the foot of the mountains.

"I don't like this at all," said Edith. "I do wish the Unknown would come in."

The boys grew more worried as the evening advanced, for the thermometer began to fall rapidly as sunset drew near.

"This wind blows straight from the North Pole, in my opinion," declared Dick. "I tell you what it is, Ned, neither you nor I want to sleep this night."

"You bet I don't. Unless Zed comes in."

"Oh, don't fret about him. You know as well as I do that he is always going off like this and running his nose into any danger, but at the right moment he always turns up again."

"I only hope it will be so to night, then. We shall have to go out and look for him if he don't show up soon."

Eleven o'clock came, and still nothing had been seen of the Unknown.

As yet no one suggested retiring.

It had grown too cold to sit outside the tent comfortably, but still they remained there watching, wrapped in warm furs, which had been brought along for just such use as this.

"We'll have to give it up," said Ned at last, "and I think you had better turn in, Edith. I'll do the

watching. Don't laugh, Dick. The Indians won't catch me napping again. Hello! Here it comes! It's beginning to snow."

Such was the fact. First a few flakes straggled down, coming then faster and faster.

It drove them all inside the tent, but Edith positively declined to go to sleep.

"We've got to stay up and watch, that's all there is about it," she said.

"Or go out on the hunt for the Unknown," suggested Dick.

Ned shook his head gloomily, declaring that it was impossible.

"Where should we go to look for him?" he asked. "It's no use talking about it. We'd better remain right where we are."

A dreary hour followed. Inside of a few moments it was snowing fast, the wind whirling the flakes about the tent, and threatening to overturn it at any moment.

Our Klondikers were in the greatest danger, and they all knew it, yet nobody said a word about it, but just sat there watching, listening and talking as cheerfully as they could, to help keep up each other's spirits.

By twelve o'clock a foot or more had fallen.

By one it was twice as deep. Ned and Dick had all they could do to keep it from tumbling into the tent, and were forced to keep shoveling it away to keep the passage clear.

"Of course we won't see Zed to-night or the Indians either," declared Dick at last. "I should say that the best thing we can do is to go to sleep."

"You can and Edith ought to," declared Young Klondike, "but I shall remain on the watch, for there is no telling what time the Unknown may come in."

He had scarcely spoken when a shot rang out above the howling of the wind.

All sprang to their feet and ran out into the snow.

"That's Zed!" cried Edith.

"Or the Indians!" echoed Dick.

"No; it's Zed. That was a revolver shot."

"Sure?"

"Edith is right," declared Ned. "We must answer it."

He immediately drew his own revolver and fired twice.

This was a regular signal always used by our little party of Klondikers. It meant "the camp lies this way."

To complete the signal three shots should be heard in answer, meaning "I hear and will come in as fast as I can."

They listened breathlessly and in a moment the shots came.

They now knew that it must be the detective, and in a few moments Ned caught sight of him, white with snow, plowing his way toward the tent through the drifts.

"I'm a-coming, boys! I'm a-coming!" he shout-

ed. "By the Jumping Jeremiah, I believe it's going to snow!"

CHAPTER III.

THE MAN WHO DIED WITH THE STORM.

IF ever a man received a warm welcome on a cold night it was the Unknown.

He came into the hut all white with snow and looking like Santa Claus with a plug hat.

"Ye gods and little fishes, I'm half frozen!" he cried. "Haven't you got a fire here? We'll freeze to death before morning sure."

Now this was strange talk for the Unknown, and all knew that he must be very cold.

The Unknown never would dress to suit the climate, and even in the severest weather he always declared he did not feel the cold.

"We haven't felt the need of a fire we are wrapped up so warm," replied Ned, "but it won't take long to build one if you think there's no danger of its bringing the Indians down on our camp."

"Indians be blamed," cried the detective. "I don't believe there's an Indian within twenty miles of us. I've been everywhere and haven't seen a trace of them. Hustle your fire up as quick as you can, boys, or I'll have to tell my name so's you can put it on my coffin plate. As sure as shooting I've got to get warm or die."

This was strange talk for the Unknown, and Ned and Dick hurried over to the pile of brush wood, and by the aid of their patent kindlings soon had a blazing fire on the snow before the tent.

The Unknown stamped his feet and rubbed his hands, warming himself before the cheerful blaze.

"We'd better keep this up all night," he said, "and first thing to-morrow let's start down the creek. This trip is a dead failure. We haven't provisions enough to last us a week, and it's liable to be two before we can do any prospecting again."

"And let all our work go for nothing," said Dick. "Come, I don't like that."

"Oh, we can come back again," declared Ned. "Of course, we've got to quit for the present. Only thing I hope is that the creek ain't frozen up again."

"No danger of that," said the detective. "Now, boys and Edith, don't you want to know where I've been?"

"I'm agreeable, I'm sure," replied Ned. "I was only waiting for you to get warmed up."

"Well, I'm warmer now and don't mind talking. I've been to the top of the mountain and it's the greatest wonder in the world I ever got down again. I tell you it's a great view from there—a great view. You can see for miles and miles in every direction."

"Any camps visible?" asked Dick.

"A few fires off Dawson way, but to the west you

can only see mountain upon mountain as far as the eye can reach."

"How many years will it be before that country is prospected?" mused Ned.

"It may never be, but it's my belief that inside of two years you'll see prospectors all over it," replied the detective. "We ain't the first who have been up here and we ain't going to be the last, for—hello! What was that?"

"A cry in the storm!" exclaimed Edith, springing up from the big bearskin in which she had been reclining. "What can it mean?"

Now, naturally when one is many miles from nowhere, the sound of a human voice, heard under such circumstances, is likely to create excitement.

Everybody in the tent was on the alert at once, and immediately gathered around the fire, striving to penetrate the darkness and whirl of falling flakes.

"Help! Help! Help!" came the voice again. "I'm perishing in the storm! Help me to get to the fire or I shall die!"

"That means another tramp through the snow," cried the Unknown, seizing the lantern. "By the Jumping Jeremiah! I thought I was through for to-night."

Ned and Dick quickly joined him, but Edith remained behind, and some twenty minutes later saw them returning slowly through the drift.

Dick was in advance with the lantern; Ned and the Unknown followed, carrying between them the body of a man, head and feet, staggering under their heavy burden, as they slowly advanced toward the tent.

"Dead, Dick?" called Edith.

"Well, I don't know," replied Dick. "I shouldn't wonder. He hasn't spoken since we picked him out of the snow down by the creek."

"I tell you he ain't dead," declared the Unknown, "but it don't follow at all that he won't die. He's an old man and pretty badly used up, but if you ask me who he is or how he came here, I'll never tell you, coz why, I don't know."

They brought him into the tent and laid him down on the bearskin.

He had long gray hair and a grizzled beard, his horny hands and general rough appearance showing plainly that he was no tenderfoot.

On the other hand, Young Klondike knew almost every old timer on the Yukon, but he did not know this man.

"Edith, my dear, if you'll be good enough to get into your own tent we'll work over him and see what can be done," said the detective. "You may as well go to sleep while you are about it, and leave him to us. If he dies you can't help it, and I'm sure it won't be our fault."

The first thing they did after Edith retired was to strip the poor old fellow and rub him down with whisky, forcing it between his set lips after a little, when signs of life began to appear.

He choked and gasped and opened his eyes, but it was some time before he could speak, and then it was

only to mutter a few words of thankfulness for the help that had been given him.

"Who are you? What's your name? Where did you come from?" demanded the Unknown, asking half a dozen questions at once.

But he might as well have asked none, for the poor old fellow was unable to answer.

"Give him another drink and let him sleep," said Ned. "It may put some life into him, but it's no sort of use trying to talk to him now."

Morning dawned. It was still snowing, and our Klondikers were still watching beside the sleeping man.

When Edith came into the tent at six o'clock the situation had not changed at all. The old man breathed faintly, but it was altogether uncertain whether he would live or die.

"There's nothing to do but to let him sleep it out," said the Unknown: "Meanwhile, we may as well have breakfast. It's my opinion the storm is about over. He'll either die with it or begin to mend when the snow stops—you'll see."

It was a tremendous storm. Fully five feet of snow had fallen on a level, and all thought of any further prospecting for the present must be abandoned—that Ned plainly saw.

Breakfast was eaten and they had just finished, when a faint sound from the bearskin attracted the attention of all.

The old man was awake and was trying to rise.

"Where am I? Where am I?" he gasped, faintly. "Is this death? Has it come at last? Shall I never get that gold?"

Young Klondike was at his side in an instant, supporting him to a sitting position and at the same time giving him a drink out of the Unknown's flask.

It revived him a little, and he seemed to collect his scattered senses.

"I know now. You saved my life," he said faintly. "I was trying to make my way to where I left my boat, further up the creek, and the storm overtook me. You came to my help, but it was too late—too late. I'm a goner. My strength is failing fast. I'm going to die, but you shall be rewarded, young man. I'll make you rich—rich! All rich! Yes—yes! It will be no use to me now, so I might as well do it. I'll start you off on the Arctic Trail."

Now all this was muttered faintly in broken sentences. Ned had to bend his ear close to catch the words, and he did not feel quite certain that the man knew exactly what he was saying.

"What is he talking about?" asked Dick, drawing nearer.

"Listen! Listen!" whispered the Unknown. "That man has got something to tell, and he hasn't got long to tell it in. Don't you make any mistake on that score."

The man kept right on murmuring. He did not seem to realize that he was talking to any one at first, and his sentences were broken and indistinct, but the talk was all of gold.

It seemed as if he had been a miner for a long time, and that at some period of his life he had struck a rich find which he was not able to avail himself of and had buried.

This was certainly it. He kept dwelling on it over and over again.

Suddenly he straightened up and clapped Ned on the shoulder.

"You!" he cried. "You're the fellow who can get it! You must get it! You shall get it! Follow the Arctic Trail and dig up the buried gold!"

"Come, you're better now!" said Ned, soothingly. "You'll live to get it yourself, my poor friend."

"Hold on!" whispered the Unknown. "Don't you jump at conclusions. That man is dying, dear boy. Listen to every word he says."

It seemed then for the moment as if it were all over, for the old man's eyes closed and his head fell forward.

They thought he was gone, but it was still snowing a little, and the Unknown as he passed Ned his flask, declared that he was not yet dead and would not die until the end of the storm.

After the drink the old man revived again and in a moment began to talk rapidly, speaking in a more distinct voice than before.

"Yes," he said, "you are the fellow. You are strong and young and have got all your life before you. You shall have the buried gold."

Ned would have answered, but the Unknown motioned to him to keep silent, and the dying man talked on.

"My name is Raymond Reynolds," he continued. "I'm an old Canadian prospector, a regular old timer. I was on the Yukon twenty years ago and was up the Klondike before that river had a name, but the greatest strike I ever made was away up beyond the Arctic Circle, me and Al Evans, my partner, five years ago. We dug out blame near a million on the north shore of Kotzebue Sound, but we were starving and had to bury the bulk of it, for our schooner was nipped in the ice and we were twenty-three days in an open boat."

He paused and appeared to doze off again.

"Listen—listen close," said the Unknown. "He'll die with the storm and before he goes we want to know where he buried that gold."

A moment more and poor Reynolds suddenly revived again.

"You want to strike Fish Point where the big standing rock is!" he cried hastily, the death rattle sounding in his throat as he spoke. "There's the first trail post. It's marked R. R. Twenty miles in there—twenty posts—lookout you don't miss 'em. Look out for the mastodon's head?"

"It has stopped snowing!" said Edith in a whisper. Did this simple remark break the slender thread which held the dying man to earth?

Perhaps!

At all events he suddenly fell backward with a sickening gasp.

Old Raymond Reynolds died with the storm.

CHAPTER IV.

OFF FOR THE ARCTIC TRAIL.

ONE bright day in the latter part of May the second steamer of the season out from Dawson City started for St. Michaels.

There was an immense crowd to see the gold hunters sail. All Dawson was on the levee.

It was good-by to this one, and good-by to that one. Everybody on shore was calling to somebody on the steamer, but "Good-by, Young Klondike! Good-by!" was the cry which sounded above all the rest.

Was Young Klondike then on board the Gold Hunter too?

Most assuredly he was, and Edith, Dick and the Unknown were with him.

They came down from Bonanza Creek nearly two weeks before, and had only been waiting for the Gold Hunter to start, to be off on the business which the steamer's name implied.

For once Young Klondike's prospecting had proved a failure. It was not at all likely that he would ever return to the little cove up among the Indian river mountains or again see the trial shaft in which they buried the remains of poor Reynolds, the man who died with the storm.

That night on deck was one of the most charming ever known on the Yukon.

Young Klondike's party gathered in the stern, and as usual fell to talking over their affairs. The hour was late, and almost everyone had retired—at least, they thought so, for they did not see the slouchy fellow with the fur cap, who crept in behind the deck-house and stood peering out at them in a curious way.

"What luck are we going to have this time, Young Klondike?" asked the Unknown. "Is this a wild goose chase, or what is it? It seems about the craziest venture yet, and still——"

"Still you have faith in it," laughed Dick. "If you hadn't we should have heard from you long before this."

"You bet!"

"Of course," said Dick, "there is no telling whether all that talk poor old Reynolds made amounts to anything or not."

"It did—I know it did," said Ned. "I tell you that man was not mad, though what in the world ever brought him away up there in Bonanza Creek, when he knew where he could put his hands on a buried million, is more than I can say."

"That's what's the matter," said the Unknown. "Still, it's one thing to know where gold has been buried away up on the north end of Alaska within the Arctic Circle, and quite another to get there. Perhaps he didn't have the dough to fit out a second schooner to

take him up to Kotzebue Sound, and was wandering about trying to raise it. That's the way the thing looks to me."

"Well, we won't have any trouble on that score," laughed Dick.

"I rather think not. We'll fit up the best steamer that can be had for money at St. Michaels, and if we can't get one there we'll go on to Juneau, and if it ain't to be had there we'll keep on to 'Frisco, or any other old place till we do get it, and I tell you what it is, boys, I have a presentiment that I'm going up to Kotzebue for another purpose. I may be wrong, but that's what I think."

"Come now, come!" laughed Ned. "None of that."

"Oh, I mean what I say. It's my belief that at last I'm going to find my man."

Now this was an old joke with Young Klondike, Edith and Dick.

There never had been a time when they started off on a new venture, that they did not have to hear the same thing from the Unknown. He was always expecting to find that mysterious criminal, whom he was supposed to be hunting, who he liked to call "his man."

In fact, it was a favorite trick of the Unknown's to suddenly pounce upon some luckless individual in a crowd, and declare that he had found his man at last.

It was a wonder that he had not been shot long ago, through over indulgence in this singular propensity.

Dick declared that the detective was always careful to pick out a man he could easily handle, and this might well be true, for the Unknown was as strong as an ox, and could handle almost any man going; certain it was that he did not hesitate to tackle the slouchy man with the fur cap.

Suddenly he saw him peering out from behind the deck-house drinking in every word said.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, there's my man now!" he exclaimed, springing up and pouncing on him before the fellow had time to beat a retreat.

"What's the matter? Who is it?" cried Ned, springing up with Dick.

"My man! A spy! A blame spy!" cried the detective, who had the fellow by the shoulders and was shaking him as a dog would shake a rat. "Watch me put the handcuffs on him, boys. Ye gods and little fishes! Wrong again!"

As he said this the Unknown threw the fellow away from him, his head striking against the deck-house with a force that almost cracked his skull.

"What the blue blazes do you mean by that?" cried the man, suddenly whipping out a revolver. "I'll learn you to insult a gentleman, you gosh-blamed fool!"

There might well have been trouble then, but Ned was too quick for him.

"Drop that!" he cried, drawing his own revolver on the instant. "Drop it right now!"

"What did he want to grab me like that for?" growled the fellow, sulkily. "Say, is he crazy or what?"

"It was a mistake, my good friend, and I've already begged your pardon," said the detective blandly. "I mistook you for someone else."

"Like blazes you did!"

"Well, I did. What did you want to listen to what we were saying for? That's where the trouble began."

"Who said I was listening to you? Can't a man stand here on the deck as well as you?"

"Oh, that's all right."

"No, it ain't all right, either! You've insulted me. I'm just as good as any man on this steamer, and you'll find it out before you get through, as sure as my name is Mike Dresser. My time will come yet."

Having said this, Mr. Mike Dresser slouched away, evidently not caring to meet the deck hands, who now came hurrying up.

The Unknown made an explanation which satisfied them, and they soon withdrew.

"Now, look at that!" said Edith. "That's what you get for your folly. What on earth was the use in going for that fellow, I'd like to know?"

"I thought he was my man," chuckled the detective. "You know that as well as I can tell you, dear boy."

"I don't know anything of the sort, nor you, either."

"Well, then, I know he was a spy, and that he was listening to every word we were saying."

"Come, that's more like it. Was he really doing that?"

"That's what he was."

"Well, he couldn't have heard much, then."

"He heard enough to know what our plans were, and don't you forget it. Now it will be all over the steamer that we are going up to the Arctic searching for buried gold."

But the Unknown was all wrong there, for as the voyage continued nothing of the sort occurred.

Moreover, Mr. Mike Dresser gave them a wide berth. It was rumored on board the Gold Hunter that the man belonged in Circle City, was on his way to San Francisco with a good pile; but whether this was true or false, Young Klondike found no means of telling up to the time they went ashore at St. Michaels, after which they saw Mr. Mike Dresser no more.

Leaving the Gold Hunter here, our little party now set out to prepare for the next stage of their long and perilous journey.

There was no steamer of any size to be had at St. Michaels, but fortunately they were able to engage a good substantial tug which seemed to be just the thing for their purpose.

Its name was the Viking, and Ned learned that it had come up from San Francisco the fall before, for the purpose of towing flat-boats loaded with pro-

visions up to Dawson. The provisions, however, failed to arrive and the scheme was abandoned, and now the Viking was for sale.

There was no question about price.

Young Klondike had all the money he wanted.

There was no man in Alaska better able to gratify his desires than Ned Golden.

So the Viking was bought and duly fitted up with everything needed for the voyage. Provisions, mining tools, comforts and even luxuries were stowed away as best they could be, and on a bright morning early in June the Viking sailed.

Only three men were engaged to accompany the expedition.

Captain Conover, an experienced navigator, was in charge, Jim Leary was to boss the engine-room, and Dave White, a rough-looking fellow, engaged at the last moment, was to act as chief cook and bottle washer and man of all work about deck.

"How do we go, Ned?" asked Edith, as St. Michaels Island began to grow small behind them. "I suppose I ought to know all about it, but I don't."

"Well, we are in the North Sound now," replied Ned, "and we strike across it to the big projecting point of land which forms the easterly shore of Behring Straits."

"And then?"

"Why, then we strike right out to sea across the mouth of Kotzebue Sound, and make for the north shore. When we get there the job will be to locate the standing rock."

"And if we don't do that we shall have our labor for our pains?"

"That's about the size of it, but I think we shall do it. I have every confidence in this scheme."

"Wonder what became of Mike Dresser?" remarked Dick, as he sat watching the man White swabbing up the deck.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, now that's strange!" exclaimed the Unknown.

"What's strange?" asked Dick.

"That you should make that remark just as I was asking myself the same thing."

"I'll bet you what you like," said Ned, "that I know why you fellows were thinking of Mike Dresser just at that particular moment."

"And why?" demanded the Unknown.

"I was thinking of him myself."

"I ask you again and why?"

"Because that fellow looks like him, that's all. You may think me a fool for saying so, but I can't help thinking it all the same."

"Upon my word, you have spoken my thoughts!" cried the Unknown.

"Can it be the same man?" asked Edith, "I confess I see no resemblance at all."

"Nor I, as he looks now," said Dick. "Mr. Mike Dresser wore side whiskers, big black ones, and this fellow is clean shaved, but——"

"But his clean shaving has been done within two

or three days, and that's what," said the Unknown.

"How can you tell?" asked Edith.

"Oh, easily enough. A man who has just shaved off hair from his face always shows it. His skin has a bleached out look."

"I'll be hanged if his hasn't then," said Ned, "and that's what attracted my attention to him in the first place, then the nose and those piercing black eyes! Yes, it's the same man."

"Where was he engaged?" asked Edith.

"Captain Conover engaged him. I'm sure I can't tell you where he picked him up."

"We don't want to do anything about it," said Ned. "It wouldn't pay us at all to make any move and let him know what we thought."

"Make any move! Certainly not!" said the detective. "Wouldn't think of such a thing. If that fellow is Mike Dresser, he knows just where we are going, and what we are going for, and don't you forget it! We've got to watch him, that's all, and be ready for whatever move he makes."

Ned interviewed Captain Conover a little later, but the master of the Viking knew nothing of Dave White, except that he had picked him up in a saloon in St. Michaels.

"He told me he came up from Juneau on the last steamer," he said. "Whether it is true or not, I'm sure I can't say. Why do you ask?"

Ned turned the question off lightly, by saying that the man reminded him of one he had known up the Yukon.

As the days passed the subject was dropped, but not forgotten.

Dave White did his work well, and interfered with nobody. There was really no reason for suspecting the man at all.

So they steamed across the North Sound and entered Behring Straits, where they met a big floe of Arctic ice loosened up by the advancing season, and came near being nipped in it, too.

"It's really the very worst month in the year for this kind of travel," Captain Conover observed. "The ice is breaking up now, and we are bound to strike another field of it before we go far in Kotzebue Sound."

"I understood you to say you had been here before, captain," remarked Edith, who stood near.

"Lots of times," was the reply. "I used to be the master of a whaling ship. I spent six winters cruising around Kotzebue Sound and other points still further north."

"Ever nipped in the ice?" asked Dick.

"Once for a whole winter," replied the captain. "We had a tough time, and don't you forget it, but we lived through it just the same, coming out in the spring as thin as laths, but with plenty of oil. In spite of our troubles that season proved the most profitable we ever had."

"Did you ever hear of a place called Fish Point?" asked Ned, and this was the first hint he had given Captain Conover of their destination.

"Fish Point! No," replied the captain. "Few of the capes and points have names on our charts; fact is, Kotzebue Sound is practically unexplored, except by whalers, and we never go ashore or bother our heads about names; but why do you ask?"

"Because that's where we are going."

"Hello! you have some definite scheme in your heads, then. Thought this was only a general prospecting trip."

"It's as definite as that. We are going to Fish Point, if we can find it."

"You'll have a hard job, unless you have something to go by."

"Ever hear of the standing rock?"

"Can't say that tells me anything. There's nothing but rock up here, as you will see when we sight the north shore of Kotzebue. If that's all you've got to go by, I'm afraid you'll have a hard job to locate the place you are looking for, boss."

Now, this was rather discouraging.

There was a lively discussion in the little cabin of the Viking that night.

It was finally determined to strike for the most westerly point of land on the north shore of Kotzebue Sound, and work down as close in shore as possible, until they sighted something which would pass as the "standing rock."

"It's the only way we can hope to get started," declared the Unknown. "Of course, there is a lot of uncertainty about this affair, anyhow. Still, I have every confidence that we are going to come out ahead."

Once out of Behring Straits the Viking steamed across the mouth of Kotzebue sound where a violent snow storm struck them. They were out of sight of land forty-eight hours.

The Viking pitched and rolled, tumbling the passengers about in the most unceremonious fashion.

Edith was terribly seasick for a while, and all hands were as uncomfortable as they could well be.

The second night of it was the worst, but when the sun rose about three o'clock it showed Ned a clear sky at last.

The wind was blowing stiffly from the northwest and the sea running high.

Poor Captain Conover, who had not taken off his clothes for two nights was glad to turn over the wheel to Ned, who was entirely competent to manage the tug when nothing involving the services of an experienced navigator was needed.

"That's land over there where you see the cloud bank," he said. "You want to steer straight for it. Don't go too near for fear of shallows, and should you see any field ice, call me at once."

Dick joined Ned in the wheel-house a little later, and they spent a quiet hour chatting over their prospects as the tug moved toward the bank of clouds.

At last the clouds lifted, and they saw the land plainly.

There were mountains rising to a great height,

bleak, rocky ridges, bare of trees, but they lay far back from the coast.

Nearer to the water line the land seemed to be broken up into a succession of low hills, very steep and rocky.

Many were covered with snow, as the caps of the mountains all were. The scene was decidedly Arctic and desolate to the last degree.

"We are inside the Arctic Circle now, ain't we?" asked Dick.

"Crossed it just after we left Behring Straits," replied Ned. "We wouldn't have to go far to find permanent ice, and—by gracious, there's an ice field now!"

Ned pointed up the sound where low down on the water lay a glittering mass of ice, reaching for many miles.

"Hadn't you better call Captain Conover?" asked Dick.

"It ain't necessary. With the wind as it is we are in no sort of danger. All is clear between here and the shore."

"Any Indians up here?" asked Dick.

"I'm sure I don't know. I think likely. Further north we would strike the Esquimaux but I don't believe we shall meet any but Indians down here."

The Viking kept steadily on until about six o'clock when the Unknown came on deck.

By this time they were pretty close to shore, and Dick called Captain Conover to whom Ned turned over the wheel.

"Well, here we are, boys," said the captain. "We are right in it now, and it remains for you to tell me what to do."

"You want to keep right along the shore till we tell you to stop," replied Ned. "You manage the tug and keep us out of the ice. We'll do the rest."

From that time forward one of the party was constantly on the lookout, but the day wore on and nothing was seen which could pass as the standing rock.

During the day they passed between the big ice field and the shore, and entered a broad stretch of open water beyond.

"Shall we see any more of it?" Ned asked.

"Most assuredly we shall," replied the captain. "We shall not only strike more, but if the wind changes this is liable to be blown in on us again. Of course it's my business to keep the tug out of the ice, and I shall do the best I can."

"And even if we should be unlucky enough to get nipped, it wouldn't be for long I suppose?" Edith asked.

"Can't tell anything about it," replied the captain. "It depends entirely upon the weather. We are running into June now, and if it turned off wet and cold we might stop in the ice till the Fourth of July, although the chances are all the other way."

"Do you think there is any fixed ice further up the sound?" asked the Unknown.

The captain's answer was that he was sure of it,

which was by no means encouraging, as that might mean a long land journey if they did not strike the standing rock before the ice limit was reached.

That night they anchored in a little cove, and by sunrise were off again, the same close watch being kept on the shore.

And besides this watch, there was another on the Viking.

The man, Dave White, was constantly under observation while on deck.

As time wore on, the suspicions of Young Klondike were confirmed, for it became evident that the man was not what he pretended to be.

He was silent and watchful himself, and always on his guard when any one spoke to him. Moreover, his eyes were constantly turned shoreward. It was clear that Mr. Dave White was watching for something, too.

"If that man don't know more about our business than any one else on this tug, I'll eat my head!" declared the Unknown. "His eye is out for the standing rock just as ours is, and I'll bet on it. We shall know more about him before we are through."

On went the tug and night came again. It was another anchoring after ten o'clock.

By this time everyone was pretty well tired out with watching, and it was agreed that all hands should turn in and sleep until two o'clock when the first of daylight would come.

Ned dropped off as soon as his head touched the pillow and he was the first up at the appointed time, jumping out of his bunk as soon as his little alarm clock rang out.

Hurrying on his clothes he went out on deck to waken Captain Conover, who slept in a state-room forward.

Morning was just breaking, and as Ned looked ahead up the sound he saw a small boat pulled by one man about half a mile away.

He hurriedly aroused the captain and called his attention to it. "What can it mean?" he asked. "Is it an Indian? Don't look like one to me."

"Indian be blowed!" cried the captain. "It's one of our boats."

And so it proved. The stern boat was missing.

So was Mr. Dave White.

They searched the tug from stem to stern but could not find him.

By this time the boat with its solitary rower had rounded a distant point of land and disappeared.

CHAPTER V.

LOCATING THE MASTODON'S HEAD

"THAT'S Fish Point and that man knows the whole business," declared the Unknown, when he came on deck and learned what had occurred.

Ned did not doubt it. Neither could Dick or Edith.

It looked as if Mr. Dave White was determined to cut in ahead of them. But even allowing this to be the case, as Ned very truly remarked, it seemed hard to tell what he expected to gain by it.

"He's been here before, that's what," declared Captain Conover, whom Young Klondike had now taken into his confidence. "I suspected as much two days ago from a remark he made. You can figure it out as you like, gentlemen, but that fellow knows what he is about."

"Let him go, we must act," declared the Unknown. "First of all start your old ark going, cap, and we'll prove whether or no that's Fish Point."

There wasn't the least trouble in proving it. All hands knew that they had reached their destination before they were half around the point.

"Look! Look!" cried Edith. "The standing rock at last."

There it was, a huge pinnacle rising almost to the height of the point, standing alone a little back from the beach.

"That's the standing rock, sure!" declared Young Klondike.

"It is," added the Unknown, "and by the Jumping Jeremiah, we've got to the end of the first stage of our journey; cap, this is where we land."

"Hanged, if it isn't," replied the captain. "I never saw that rock before, and I've been pretty well along this part of the coast, too."

They ran in toward the rock and went ashore.

If anything was needed to confirm their suspicions about Dave White, the sight of the Viking's stern boat drawn up on the beach did the business fully.

"He's landed here and gone back among the hills," declared the Unknown; "and that's where we are going, too."

There was no inducement to start a camp here on the shore, and after some deliberation it was determined to start for the interior at once, leaving Jim Leary in charge of the tug.

"Thing is to decide which way to go," said Dick. "If we could only strike the trail."

"White went that way!" exclaimed the Unknown, pointing up among the rocks further back from the shore.

"How do you know?" asked Ned.

"Can't you tell?"

"No."

"You don't see that piece of paper lying against the rock up there?"

"Thunder, yes! I see it now."

"Then there you are. He dropped it. Who else could? Young Klondike, there's your trail."

They hurried up to the spot and examined the paper.

It was a page of a San Francisco daily of recent date.

"No question about it now," said Ned. "The man went this way and—look! look! what's that but one of our posts? We're on the beginning of our great Arctic Trail."

Further on over the rocks was a long stretch of level ground and right at the beginning of it was the weather beaten trunk of a small cedar tree driven into the ground.

Ned was first on the spot and he was not long in discovering that the post had been blazed or flattened off by an ax on one side.

In the middle of the blazing he was able to trace faintly the letters R. R. cut in the wood.

The excitement this discovery caused can better be imagined when we call attention to the fact that Young Klondike's party had traveled nearly two thousand miles on what more than once had appeared to them like a wild goose chase.

Here was something substantial.

The story of old Raymond Reynolds was no idle tale, and all that now remained was to trace up the twenty trail posts and locate the mastodon's head.

Now, the thought of Mr. Dave White, or Mr. Mike Dresser, or whatever the man's true name might be, did not give them the slightest concern.

"He can't harm us any," declared the Unknown, "and if we set right about it, we won't be long behind him. Only thing that bothers me is to know how he got onto this business."

"He must have known Raymond Reynolds," declared Young Klondike. "No matter. Let him look to himself if he has any idea of mussing with us—that's all."

The next thing was to prepare for the journey, and that meant a return to the tug.

Knapsacks and hampers were packed in short order, and in less than half an hour the party, with Young Klondike in the lead, started on their long journey back among the hills.

From the first trail post to the second, their way lay across the table-land.

It was a barren waste of rock, with scarcely earth enough to support the few blades of grass which were trying to struggle into life.

There was no snow here, but they could see it further along among the hills, and there they hoped to strike Dave White's trail.

"For," said the Unknown, "I make no doubt that he has been here before and knows exactly where to look for the posts."

"Ain't that the second one there?" exclaimed Edith, pointing on ahead.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, so it is!" cried the Unknown, running forward. "Yes, this is it, boys! It's blazed same as the other and carries the R. R."

A little further on the ascent of the second hill began, and before they reached the top they struck the snow.

"And here's the trail," said Dick. "There's your man White, cap. Big feet, steps wide apart. Hasn't got off his sea legs yet."

"Ye gods and little fishes, why, you'd make a bang-up detective, Dick!" cried the Unknown. "Yes, it's our man sure enough, and all we've got to do now is

to follow in his footsteps. That he knows exactly where he's going there ain't a doubt."

It sounded easy when the Unknown said it, but there were five tired people by the time the tenth post was reached, just the same.

It was up hill and down dale; some of the way they had to plow through snow drifts and again to slide down over wet and slippery rocks.

Here they stopped to rest and eat, putting in a full hour before starting out again, when they pushed it through to the eighteenth post without stopping again.

This post lay at the top of a hill where the snow was pretty deep, and as they approached it they saw at a glance that something had interfered with the progress of Mr. Dave White.

Close by the post—all around it in fact—the snow had been trodden down by many feet.

There was a deep indentation in one place as if a man had fallen. Then from here the one trail was divided into many. Men seemed to have gone down the hill in at least three different ways.

"Hello! Hello!" cried the Unknown. "What's been the row here?"

"A fight," said Dick.

"With Indians," added Ned.

"And they took Dave White prisoner," said Edith, "and then they divided into three parties to bluff us, in case we undertake to follow them."

"Three amateur detectives trying to teach an old hand at the bellows his business," laughed the Unknown.

"Ain't it so?" demanded Ned. "Do we make a mistake?"

"Not a bit of it. Of course it's so. You read the signs like three professionals, but let me ask you which way they took Dave White?"

Here was a question neither of them could answer.

"Do you know, Zed?" asked Dick.

"I do."

"How can you tell?"

"That's my business, dear boy; to give it away to you would be to expose the secrets of the trade."

"Bother your trade secrets. I can tell," said Ned.

"And how?"

"The indentation of the moccasin prints are deeper on this side of the hill than the other."

"And that implies?"

"That they were carrying Dave White."

"Exactly! You're an expert; you've hit the truth."

"He must have been wounded, then?"

"That don't follow."

"And why?"

"Because it don't! What's the matter with all this being a put-up job?"

"That's just like you detectives. If a man is robbed you always try to make it out that he robbed himself. If he is murdered, you try to make the public believe he committed suicide, and that only to hide your own

stupidity. I think I understand the breed pretty well, don't you?"

"Not a doubt of it, but among friends one may speak his mind."

"Certainly."

"Then mine is that the Honorable Mr. Dave White knows these Indians well; that there was no fight, only a big bluff to scare us and keep us from pushing ahead."

"Which being the case, ahead we go right now!" declared Ned. "I won't attempt to dispute you, for by gracious, I believe you are right!"

But Captain Conover sneered openly at this warning, declaring that it was all nonsense.

"I can't understand who these Indians are," he said. "I never saw any around these parts. What in thunder do they live on when there's nothing here but rocks and snow?"

This question was answered when they came in sight of the last trail post two miles further on.

They saw it from the top of a hill, standing in a broad, deep valley, backed on the other side by the true mountain range.

There was no snow in the valley, through which a stream ran.

It was easy to see that in the summer season this valley must be as fertile as any spot in this desolate region. Indeed, the grass was already cropping up here and there in spots, covering the brown surface of the half-frozen ground with great patches of green.

"That's a bang-up place for placer diggings!" cried Ned, with a good deal of enthusiasm.

"You bet it is," replied Dick. "Just see, the gold would wash down from those mountains and lodge in the bed of that creek. Couldn't be anything better. If this country is at all like the Klondike, one might count on finding gold here sure."

They were about to push on to the last of the trail posts when the Unknown stopped them, suggesting that it would be a good thing to take a survey of the country before descending.

"Of course we can't see anything down there in the hole," he said; "if the Indians are camped anywhere about here we want to know it, and now's our chance to find out."

The Unknown had a splendid glass and Ned another, and they set out to make a careful survey, taking their time to it so as to make sure.

"That's smoke away down there at the lower end of the valley, ain't it?" said the detective at last.

"Sure it is!" cried Ned. "Strange I didn't see it, and I was looking that way too."

"It has just begun to rise. It ain't to be expected that you would see it when it wasn't there."

"That's smoke, and it means an Indian camp," Captain Conover declared.

"I suppose it couldn't be miners?" suggested Edith.

"Quite impossible," said the captain. "When you first commenced to talk about coming here I would have sworn that no white man had ever been

here before you. Of course I'll have to give up on that now, but except your man Reynolds and his partner I don't believe any other ever saw this place till we came."

"Times up!" cried the Unknown, pocketing his glass. "We may as well go down and look for the mastodon's head."

"Say, gents, I suppose you'll think me mighty ignorant, but what is a mastodon?" Captain Conover asked as they pushed on down the hill.

Ned undertook to explain that a mastodon was a fossil elephant with curved tusks and much larger than the ordinary elephant.

"Their bones have been found in great quantities in different parts of Alaska," he went on to say. "There must have been a time once when they existed here in great numbers, and there are some who claim that they exist here still."

"Well, now I've heard something about elephants being found up here," said the captain, "but of course that's only an Injun yarn."

"If it really is an Indian yarn then all the more likely it is true," said Dick, "for how would the Indians know about the mastodon or any other species of elephant unless they had seen one? I don't believe it is an Indian yarn. Much more likely it was started by some lying white man who wanted to astonish his friends."

Dick was still talking about mastodons when they were almost at the bottom of the hill, and he might have continued on the same subject indefinitely, but just then the Unknown caught his foot in something and went sprawling on his face.

"Ye gods and little fishes, what do they want to leave that stub sticking up here for?" he growled. "I'll enter a complaint to the mayor of Kotzebue Sound! Hang me if I don't!"

"Look!" cried Ned, "by gracious, your stub is nothing more nor less than a mastodon's tusk! There's a head buried here sure."

It was certainly the end of a tusk which projected above the frozen soil.

The boys were in great excitement.

Young Klondike was sure they had reached the end of their journey and discovered the location of the buried gold, but this theory was knocked all in the head by Edith who just then sighted another tusk sticking out of the ground a little further along.

"If them's mastodons' heads, what's them down there?" asked Captain Conover, pointing down into the valley at what Ned had taken to be a pile of stones.

"Well, I'll be blamed!" cried the Unknown. "The woods are full of mastodons' heads, so to speak."

"It's certainly a good year for them," chuckled the captain. "Say, friends, you've got your hands full now. There's mastodons' heads everywhere. Which is the right one—tell me that?"

No one in his senses would have pretended to answer such a question there.

When they got down to the bottom of the slope,

they saw that they had penetrated into a regular bone yard.

The base of the hill for a quarter of a mile and more, was strewn with mastodons' bones.

Not only the skulls, but giant leg bones, shoulder blades, ribs, and in some parts entire skeletons.

There was something very strange about all this and Ned began to speculate why all these animals should have come there into the valley to die.

He might as well have saved himself the trouble for wiser heads than his have tried in vain to solve the same problem.

Several such prehistoric bone yards have been discovered in the far North, notably one in Siberia, on the opposite side of Behring Straits.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah! this knocks me silly!" exclaimed the Unknown. "How in thunder are we ever to pick out the particular mastodon's head we want from all this mass?"

"Can't be done, of course, and this ain't the place," said Edith. "Old man Reynolds may have taken his mastodon's head from this pile, but you may be certain if he set it up for a landmark it was somewhere else."

They pushed on down to the stream, and stopped at the last trail post which stood on the bank.

It was much weathered, the R. R. on the blazing with which each one of them had been marked being scarcely visible.

"This ends our journey!" cried Young Klondike. "We've had wonderful good luck to locate the place so easily, and you mark my words the rest will come."

By this time, as may well be imagined, Edith was pretty well tired out, and so were the others if they would but own it.

"We may as well pitch our tents here," said the Unknown. "I don't see any sense in prowling about, looking for the mastodon's head, until we've had a good long rest and a feed."

"And located the Indian camp," suggested Ned.

"That's my work," said the detective. "You give me an hour's rest and I'll get right about it. One thing is sure, Dave White didn't come here ahead of us, so our chance of finding the buried gold is A1."

Captain Conover had been carrying the tent, and he was only too glad to get rid of it. The boys lost no time in setting it up.

It was rather an extensive affair. Ned had it made expressly for the occasion. It had two compartments—a large one for the men, and a smaller one for Edith's accommodation.

The hampers were now unpacked and everything put in shape for a long stay, but when it came to the question of making a fire the Unknown declared himself stumped, for there was nothing in the shape of wood in sight except the trail post, and it was a problem where old Reynolds could have obtained that and the others along the mile.

"There's plenty of dry grass here, but we can't do

any cooking with that," said Dick, dolefully. "For my part I don't see what we are going to do."

"Try bones, boys," called Edith from her private apartment in the back of the tent.

"Hooray for the Queen of the Klondike!" cried the Unknown. "The very thing I was going to suggest, but someone always cuts in ahead of me when I have a bright idea."

The bones were as dry as chips and all went over to the foot of the hill bringing back as many as they could carry.

It was rather hard work to get the bones lighted, but once they got them going they burned freely enough and without much odor.

Soon Edith had a savory stew in progress, and there were canned vegetables and a canned plum pudding, so altogether they made out quite a sumptuous meal.

It was now almost nine o'clock and Edith declared her intention to turn in at once, but the Unknown announced his intention of starting out to locate the Indians' camp.

"You shan't go alone," declared Ned. "I won't hear of it."

"Ye gods and little fishes! What's the matter with me in my old age? Do I need a boy to lead me about at this time of day?" cried the detective with a greater display of temper than he usually showed.

"We've talked it all over and have decided that Dick must go with you," said Ned, positively. "Who's bossing this business, you or I?"

"Emphatically it's Young Klondike. Oh, I don't dispute that."

"Then the fiat has gone forth. Dick goes."

"I suppose I shall have to bow to the dictum of the dictator. Dick, come along," the detective laughed.

Captain Conover rolled himself up in his blankets and lay down in the tent soon after they started, leaving Ned alone on the watch.

There was still an hour and more of daylight left.

As Ned sat before the tent watching the descending sun his thoughts naturally turned to the question of the mastodon's head.

How were they to locate it? Where were they to look for it? It was a puzzler. He could not tell.

Then all at once it occurred to him to go over and examine the trail post, and see if there could be any possibility be anything on it to indicate the whereabouts of the mastodon's head.

He looked at the letters R. R. attentively, and noticed how weather-worn they were, and then his attention was called to certain indistinct lines below the letters themselves.

"That was a hand," thought Ned, after a moment. "That's what it was, a hand; and the index finger points up the creek."

He peeped in on Edith, and finding her sleeping soundly, shouldered his rifle and started up stream.

Young Klondike was sure that the pointing hand

meant something, and granting this was true, what could it mean but the way to the mastodon's head?

He walked on about a quarter of a mile, coming at last to a lot of loose rocks strewn here and there over the ground, and he was no sooner in among them than he discovered a deep hole dug close to the bank of the creek.

"Raymond Reynolds' old shaft!" exclaimed Ned. "By gracious, I'm working the Arctic Trail for all it is worth!"

And, indeed, it looked so, for as Young Klondike kicked over the gravel on the dump alongside the shaft, down rolled a nugget as big as a hen's egg.

The tale of the dying man was true.

Here was the mine and the gold, but where was the mastodon's head?

CHAPTER VI.

HOW THE GRAY WOLF SHOWED HIS CLAWS.

"I'm going down that shaft," said Young Klondike to himself, as he stood gazing into the hole which old Raymond Reynolds and his party left behind them. "This thing has got to be looked into clear through, and I may as well do it now as any other time. I can work it alone, too."

The shaft was about twenty feet deep, and there were drifts on both sides of it. How far these ran in under the frozen ground, of course Young Klondike could not tell.

Ned now hurried back to the tent for a rope.

Edith was still resting quietly and it seemed perfectly safe to leave her, for the direction of the old shaft was toward the supposed Indian camp and the way taken by Dick and the Unknown.

Returning to the shaft with his rope, Ned made it fast to a big boulder and lowered himself down into the hole hand over hand.

Lighting the lantern he flashed it into the left hand drift.

This only ran in about forty feet, but the right hand drift took a turn and the end was not visible.

Ned went into the left hand drift first, and examined the walls with the deepest attention.

It was gold, gold, gold! Gold everywhere he looked. It cropped out between the gravel stones in the form of nuggets of all shapes and all sizes, from a hen's egg down to a pea.

Between the nuggets were thousands of shining particles which showed that the precious yellow dust was everywhere.

Old Raymond Reynolds' mine was one of astonishing richness—that any one could see.

There was a rusty old pick-ax lying with other tools at the end of the drift. Ned seized it and tried to loosen some of the nuggets, but they were frozen solid.

The remains of a fire were to be seen at the end of

the drift, showing that Reynolds and his partner had been obliged to burn their way as they went.

"Here's good diggings," thought Ned. "If we get the chance to work there's no need of taking the tug back empty, that's one thing sure."

He had now seen all that was to be seen in the left hand drift and he turned his attention to the other.

"Wonder why they didn't run this in straight?" he said to himself, as he entered and then he immediately discovered the cause.

Right before him was a mass of giant bones firmly embedded in the frozen soil.

"A whole mastodon!" cried Ned. "By gracious, here's a find! It would be worth a fortune if we could only get it out and send it to some museum in the States."

Then he looked up and saw that he had been deceived. The skeleton was not whole. The legs and the ribs were there all right, but the head was missing. A big hole was scooped out of the gravel above where it had once been.

"It's getting warm!" muttered Young Klondike. "I'll bet it is this mastodon's head I'm looking for. What's around on the other side of all these bones? That's the next thing to find out."

The drift had been carried around the bones, but there was only a narrow passage between the big breast bone and the wall, hardly wide enough for Ned to squeeze through; in fact he tried it and could not get through, and he was standing there wondering what he ought to do next when suddenly a bright idea came into his head.

"If I had been running this drift I should have made the opening right between the legs," he exclaimed. "Wonder if they didn't do it?"

He flashed the lantern on the gravel between the big leg bones and saw at a glance that it was differently bedded in from that along the walls.

"That's been dug out sure," thought Ned, giving the gravel a kick.

Immediately the whole mass tumbled in.

"Hooray! That's just what I thought!" cried Ned, flashing the lantern between the bones.

He immediately saw that there were bones beyond; a second look showed him that these bones were the tusks of a mastodon.

"It's the head! It's the mastodon's head!" he fairly shouted, and then dropping on his hands and knees he crawled through between the legs to find himself in a big natural hole in the gravel deposit.

It could scarcely be called a cave; it was more of a wide crevice formed by the settling of the gravel bed toward the stream.

But call it by whatever name you please it was just what Young Klondike had been looking for; on the ground in the middle of the open space lay the missing mastodon's head.

For some minutes Ned stood surveying his discovery, and then hurriedly retreated to the shaft.

"The whole story is true," he thought. "The gold

was buried in this hole, and the mastodon's head was put on top of it. The cat is out of the bag."

He seized the rope, and was about to pull himself up out of the shaft, when all at once the silence was broken by a piercing cry.

"Edith!" gasped Ned.

His heart was in his mouth as he pulled himself up out of the shaft.

Once more the cry was heard, but all was still when Ned's feet touched the ground.

He looked over toward the tent, and saw a huge gray wolf spring out.

It was as big as a man, and as it ran back toward the cliffs, a shot was fired and Edith came running out.

"Ned! Ned!" she screamed.

At first Ned thought that Edith fired at the wolf, but he now saw that she held no rifle.

Before he could make a move three Indians leaped out of the tent.

One seized Edith by both wrists and slung the poor girl upon his back, running like lightning down the creek, while another, who held a rifle, fired at Ned, who was barely spry enough to dodge the shot.

Quick as thought Ned unslung his rifle and let fly.

It was no use!

The Indians ducked down and ran on all fours, putting the tent between them.

Ned dashed on, but when he got around the tent all three of the Indians had vanished.

So had Edith and so also had the gray wolf.

Young Klondike found himself alone.

For the first few moments Ned ran around like a madman, looking for something to kill.

He could scarcely realize the terrible calamity which had fallen upon him, and he blamed himself for leaving his post.

Right in the midst of it all a loud shout was heard up the creek, and looking in that direction Ned saw Dick and the Unknown running toward him.

"What is it, what is it?" shouted the detective. "Don't tell me you've let those red devils capture Edith! Don't tell me that!"

"They've got her," groaned Ned. "Don't say a word to me. I shall shoot myself if you do."

"Hold on now! No nonsense!" cried Dick. "We saw it all! Where were you? Why did you leave the tent? What were you doing over there among those rocks?"

Dick was full of his questions as he came running up, and it was all Ned could do to answer them, he was so overcome.

"Take it easy, dear boy; take it easy," said the detective. "We won't blame you, but don't you ever go gold hunting again when you are left on guard."

"If we don't find Edith there'll be no chance to do it again," groaned Ned. "I tell you what it is, this will kill me. I shall never leave this place alive!"

"Pshaw! Don't talk rubbish! We've got to act. What did you find there among the rocks?"

"Reynolds' old mine and that mastodon's head in one of the drifts."

"Good enough as far as it goes! We found the Indian camp deserted, and I immediately suspected that they had started for us, going by way of the hill, so Dick and I hurried back, and got here just in time to be too late."

"Trails!" exclaimed Dick. "No time for talk now; we've got to go to work."

"There'll be no trail on this frozen ground, and you needn't expect it," replied the detective. "Ned, which way did the gray wolf go?"

"Toward the hill."

"Ha! then by the Jumping Jeremiah! that's the way we want to go."

"What do we care for the wolf? It's Edith we are after."

"Hold up! Not so fast. You ain't half sharp. Couldn't you see that the gray wolf was a man?"

"Never dreamed of such a thing."

"It's a fact though."

"But he couldn't have been an Indian. They fired at him."

"Who said he was an Indian?"

"What then?"

"I don't know. All I can say is that was a man with a wolf skin drawn over him. To that I'll swear every time."

"Dave White?"

"Perhaps. Let's hurry though. More than likely there's some cave over there in the side of the hill, and that's how the Indians managed to disappear so suddenly."

"Don't you believe it," declared Dick. "They got among those big bowlders over there and ran crouching down. Come on! There ain't a moment to lose!"

The bowlders in question lay strewn over the ground at a short distance beyond the tent.

They hurried to the spot and saw at once that Dick's theory was a reasonable one. The line of bowlders stretched over to the base of the hill, and as they followed on they struck the trail in a sandy stretch where the top sand was not frozen. There were imprints of hands on the sand.

"This is the way they went," said the Unknown. "There ain't a doubt about it, and—look! look! There they are now!"

Up on the side of the hill they caught sight of the three Indians. Edith was between them; they were hurrying the poor girl up the hill.

Ned instantly threw up his rifle.

"Look out! Look out!" cried Dick. "You'll hit Edith!"

"Not much! Leave me alone for that!" replied Ned, and setting his teeth he blazed away.

One of the Indians gave a yell and dropped in his tracks.

But he was instantly up again and ran off like a deer up the hill.

The others let go their hold on Edith and turned to fire.

Again Young Klondike's rifle spoke, and they saw the gun drop from the hand of one of the Indians, while Edith started to run down the hill.

The other Indian could have killed her easily if he had chosen, but he made no such move. Both turned and ran after the first one for all they were worth, disappearing in a moment over the brow of the hill.

Of course it did not take long to complete the rescue then.

Ned, Dick and the Unknown ran up the hill and Edith running down they met half way.

"Oh, Edith! Edith! Can you ever forgive me?" cried Ned.

"Don't say a word about it! After them!" said Edith. "This job must be finished. We want to show those fellows what sort of folks we are."

Edith was as cool as a cucumber and led the charge up the hill, but it all went for nothing, for when they reached the top the Indians were no longer in sight.

"They came into the tent suddenly," explained Edith, "but I was awake when they came in. Did you see the wolf? Oh, boys, I was never so frightened in my life. I don't know what woke me, but when I opened my eyes there was a great gray wolf bending over me. It almost took my breath away. I reached for my rifle, but couldn't get it. The minute I made a move the wolf backed out of the tent, and the next I knew I heard a shot and in rushed the three Indians. I was a prisoner before I knew it, and goodness knows what might have happened to me if you had not come along as you did."

They stayed some fifteen minutes on top of the hill watching for the Indians, but saw nothing of them, and so went back to the tent.

From that time on until six o'clock next morning there was no sleeping done, all hands keeping a sharp watch.

Nothing more was seen of either the Indians or the gray wolf, and after breakfast Ned suggested that they begin work under the mastodon's head.

"Someone has got to keep watch and I'm the man," declared the Unknown. "If those snoozers steal a march on me it will be because I've dropped dead."

"Why not let Captain Conover keep watch?" suggested Dick.

"Yes, if he ever wakes!" laughed Ned. "The seven sleepers ain't in it with that man."

Now we neglected to mention that Captain Conover slept peacefully through all that had happened and was sleeping still.

Fact was the good man had scarcely had any rest since they left St. Michaels and was paying for it now.

"We'd better wake him before we start out," said Dick. "At all events the good man wants something to eat."

So Ned shook up the captain who was not a little astonished to learn all that had occurred.

"Do you mean to tell me that there was a wolf and Indians in the tent and I never knew it?" he exclaimed.

"It's all right about the Indians, but I won't vouch for the wolf," replied the Unknown. "I claim it was only a man in disguise."

"I don't believe it," said Edith. "I'm sure it was a wolf."

"Whoever saw a wolf that size?" said the detective. "No one on the face of the earth. You can believe what you like, Edith, my dear, but I tell you it was a man."

"It can't have been nobody but White then," said Captain Conover. "Now, look here. I ain't much on mining. Suppose I stay here and keep guard."

No one objected, so they left the master of the Viking to get his own breakfast, and all went down to the old shaft.

"I reckon I'd better do the watching act, too," said the detective. "I can't trust that man; first thing we know he'll be off to sleep again."

"That's what's the matter," replied Ned. "You do it and you can do the hoisting act at the same time."

But the Unknown insisted upon going down into the shaft first to have a look at the mastodon's head. Dick kept watch while he was gone.

"Well, what do you think of it?" he asked, when the detective came climbing up out of the shaft.

"I think it is a mastodon's head," replied the Unknown gravely. "By the Jumping Jeremiah, I'll swear to that!"

"And as to the rest?"

"How can I tell? Since we came into this valley we've seen a dozen mastodon's heads. This may be the right one and it may not."

"I'll go down and have a look," said Dick. "Hello there, Ned; what are you after now?"

Ned was shaking the rope and calling up from the shaft.

"Let down the tools. We are going right to work," he shouted.

So Dick let down the picks and shovels and a heavy crow-bar.

Some of these had been brought from the Viking, but the bar was found near the mouth of the shaft and had evidently been there since old man Reynolds' time.

"There's your mastodon, Dick," said Young Klondike, pointing into the drift; "if you want to see the head you'll have to crawl between the legs."

Edith was already in the cavity, working around with the pick Ned found in the other drift.

"It is a mastodon's head, for a fact," remarked Dick, as he crawled in through the opening. "Do you expect to dig here without a fire?"

"Why, certainly," replied Edith, sticking her pick into the ground. "Look; it's not much frozen here. If we can only get the head out of the way, we can dig here easy enough."

"We can soon fix that," declared Dick. "Lend

me a hand here, Ned; we'll snake it through between the legs in short order."

But this proved something easier said than done. The head was tremendously heavy, and it took all the tugging and pulling the three of them could do to get it through between the legs, which was at last accomplished, the head nearly choking up the drift.

"What's all that racket about down there?" shouted the Unknown.

"We are moving the mastodon's head," answered Dick. "What's the report above ground?"

"All quiet—wind east and a storm coming."

"Don't believe it."

"Wait and see."

"It won't come to-day, anyhow; we'll have old man Reynolds' gold out before it strikes us, and don't you forget it!"

They were just starting back into the drift, when, as though history was bound to repeat itself, a sharp cry rang out in the direction of the tent.

"What's that?" shouted Ned.

"Blamed if I know. It must be that something has happened to Cap Conover," replied the detective. "I'll go and see."

He started for the tent on the run.

Ned and Dick pulled themselves up out of the shaft and ran after him.

The Unknown was first to reach the tent.

He could see nothing of Captain Conover, and the cry was not heard again.

As he drew near the tent he suddenly saw the paw of a gray wolf projected from the canvas.

It remained visible for an instant, displaying long, sharp claws, and then suddenly it was drawn back, and the cry rang out again.

CHAPTER VII.

UNEARTHING THE BURIED GOLD.

"THE gray wolf again!" cried the Unknown. "Come on, boys—come on!"

Ned and Dick ran up to him, and they cautiously advanced to the tent.

All was silent now, and they had the gravest fears for the safety of the master of the Viking.

Ned shouted his name, but got no answer. They paused in front of the tent, hardly knowing what to do.

"Go ahead and see if the wolf is in there, Young Klondike," said the Unknown.

"I can do it, if you're afraid."

"You shan't do it—I won't let you. Wait, I'm listening."

"Yes, and you can't hear anything, for I'm listening, too."

"Thunder! We are too late!" cried Dick, suddenly. "Look there!"

He pointed back of the tent toward the hills.

There was an immense gray wolf scampering over the ground.

"A man!" shouted the detective. "Hold on there, you sinner! Hold on!"

"Nonsense! It's a wolf!" cried Ned, and he raised his rifle and fired.

Evidently the shot was a miss. The wolf ran in among the bowlders and disappeared.

Meanwhile, Dick had entered the tent.

"Oh, come here! Come here!" he cried. "This is no wolf's work. There's been murder done here."

They thought so at first, for the poor captain lay unconscious on the ground all black in the face.

There were marks of a man's hand on his throat. It looked very much as if somebody had been trying to choke Captain Conover to death.

"That's a man's work, I'm right," declared the detective. "Hustle, boys! He's not gone yet."

They were still working over the poor fellow when Edith came hurrying up.

Captain Conover was not dead, but there could be little doubt that he would have come to his end if the boys and the Unknown had not come up as they did.

When he revived sufficiently to speak he told his story.

"I was sitting quietly in the tent here eating breakfast, when all of a sudden that thing sprang in," he said. "Heavens! He was at my throat quicker than scat, and all the fighting I could do went for nothing. Next thing I knew I didn't know nothing, and then you fellows were bending over me. It was a fearful experience. I never want to go through anything like it again."

"Was it a wolf or was it a man?" asked the detective, harping on his favorite theory.

"I'll never tell you," answered the captain. "It all came on me so sudden, but, of course no wolf would have attacked me as that thing did."

"Didn't you see his hands?"

"Saw nothing but stars! It must have been a man, though. Do you say you can see imprints of a man's fingers on my throat?"

"That's what," replied Ned. "Don't you say so, Dick?"

"Certainly I do," said Dick.

"And I said so from the first," added the Unknown. "Cap, did you ever have any trouble with Dave White?"

"Well, I did. I see you are thinking of the same thing I am."

"That's right. When was it and what was it?"

"Why," said the captain, "it was the first night out from St. Michaels. You were all asleep then, and I found him trying the cabin door."

"Hello!" cried the Unknown; "you didn't tell us that."

"Didn't think it amounted to anything at the time."

"What happened?" asked Ned.

"Why, I spoke to him, and he answered me sassy like, so I hauled off and knocked him down."

"Then there you have it! The whole thing is explained. Did he say anything?"

"Swore he'd get square with me, but I didn't hear anything more from him, and supposed that was the end of it. Seems it wasn't though—that is, if you are right."

Here was a curious and very unpleasant turn of affairs.

Captain Conover naturally objected to staying alone at the tent, so the Unknown agreed to patrol the ground between it and the shaft, to which Ned, Dick and Edith now returned.

"Now then," said Ned, "if they'll only leave us in peace for a little while we'll see what can be done toward unearthing the buried gold. Edith, did you find you could dig all right there?"

"Certainly we can," declared Edith. "It's warm down here and the ground is only frozen an inch or two."

"Then we'll go right at it. We may as well tackle the entire space where the mastodon's head rested; get to work on the other side of it, Dick, and I'll stay here. Edith, you can work just where you are. If there's any gold here we'll precious soon shake it out."

There was about two inches of frost in the ground, but below that it was easy digging.

Ned felt sure they would not have to go far, and so it proved, but it did not turn out at all as he expected it would for all that.

Visions of a big chest filled with gold floated through Young Klondike's brain. Dick looked for bags of dust and nuggets, but neither of them thought anything of a little rusty tin box when it was thrown out by Dick's spade, other than to suppose that it was something which had accidentally been dropped into the hole.

"What's that?" said Dick, stooping to pick it up.

He opened it and a lot of loose sand fell out, which might well have worked its way in by accident.

"Nothing but an old tin box," replied Ned.

"Guess old man Reynolds dropped it into the hole."

So the box was thrown aside, and they went on digging and kept at it for a good hour or more.

Nothing but disappointment awaited them.

The further down they went the harder and more compact the gravel became.

All at once Ned's pick struck something hard which gave back a ringing sound.

"The iron chest at last!" exclaimed Edith. "We are right in it now!"

"It's only a rock," said Dick, dolefully.

"I'm afraid so," replied Ned. "Still, you can't be sure."

"If it is a rock, that's the wind-up."

Ned said nothing, but he appreciated Dick's remark fully. To suppose that old Raymond Reynolds would go to the trouble of tumbling a rock down the shaft

and dragging it into the drift to put over the buried gold was almost too much. He felt quite sure that it was a rock, and it turned out to be nothing else.

They soon uncovered a mass of hard, black slate—the hardest rock known to miners.

"A ledge!" exclaimed Edith, as soon as she saw what it was.

"It ain't anything else," said Ned, dismally.

"We've come to the end of our rope."

A little further work demonstrated this fully.

The rock proved to be a ledge, and Ned threw down his spade in despair.

"We're dished," said Dick.

"Evidently," added Edith. "We've had our labor for our pains."

There was a good deal of talk after that.

The Unknown called to know how they were getting on, and they all went out into the shaft to tell their tale of woe.

"You've struck the wrong mastodon's head, that's all," he said.

"Don't believe it," replied Dick emphatically.

"What is your idea, then?"

"I think it's all a hoax," said Captain Conover, who joined the Unknown at the mouth of the shaft.

"That's all rubbish, cap, if you'll allow me to say so," declared Ned emphatically. "Would any sane man go to the trouble of putting down those trail posts and digging this shaft just to play a joke? It's ridiculous to suppose it."

"I tell you I'm right, and it's the wrong mastodon's head," persisted the Unknown; then suddenly he remembered that he had no answer from Dick as yet, and he called out to him again.

"Why I was thinking of that tin box," said Dick, "and yet it can't be that."

"Tin box—what tin box?" demanded the detective.

Ned explained, adding: "But how can it be, Dick? Wasn't the box just full of sand?"

"So we thought. I'd like to see it again, though."

"Is there anything to hinder? I suppose it's there on the dump, but what can it amount to?"

"Another clew," said Edith. "That's what Dick is thinking of, I know."

"That's it," replied Dick. "Anyhow, it will do no harm to look it up."

So they all went back into the drift and began poking over the dump until at last they found the box which was quite empty.

"Sold again," said Ned. "What are you looking for now, Dick?"

"Why, if there was anything in the box it went out with the sand, of course," answered Dick, who was poking over the dirt.

"There wasn't anything in it; there couldn't have been, or we'd have seen it before."

"I want to make sure. Remember, the tin box was just below the surface, right under the mastodon's head. It may have been what old Reynolds meant. Hello! here's something! What's this?"

Dick picked a folded paper, yellow and water-stained, out of the dirt.

He opened it, and with some difficulty was able to decipher the following:

"I buried the gold on the bank of the creek, thirteen paces from the twentieth trail post due west, and then ten paces north. I put a round white stone to mark the spot. I didn't have any scales, but I should estimate that there must be dust and nuggets weighing up about six hundred thousand dollars. No one knows where the gold is buried but me. My partner, Al Evans, is a swindler, a black-hearted scoundrel, a thief. If by any chance he ever gets this gold I hope it may prove a curse to him as long as he lives.

"RAYMOND REYNOLDS."

"Hooray!" cried Edith. "Dick, you've hit it. We've located the buried gold!"

"It's Luckey's luck!" said the Unknown, from the ground above. "Blessed be the day of small things! If Dick hadn't thought of the little tin box we wouldn't be in it now."

"We are in it and I'm going out of it," laughed Ned, catching the rope and pulling himself up out of the shaft.

Dick followed him, Edith coming last, making no more of pulling herself up out of the hole than the boys.

Captain Conover came along just then and the situation was explained to him, and all went to the trail post.

"Who's to do the pacing?" queried Ned. "There's a difference in legs. Thirteen paces by the Unknown's little stumps would be quite different from thirteen of mine."

"A pace is supposed to be three feet, and don't you laugh at my legs," chuckled the detective. "If you think you can do it better than anyone else, Young Klondike, why fire away."

"We'll measure it off some way," said Ned, "and I've no doubt we'll hit it." He paced off the distance west and north and it brought him to the bank of the creek. There sure enough was the white stone.

Of course this discovery threw everyone into a state of excitement.

The ground here was frozen hard and no digging could be done without a fire. This meant a lot of bone burning and it was an hour or more before the first throwing out was done.

Then the ashes were cleared away, and all hands went at it, but were only able to get down about a foot.

"This is filled in ground sure," said the detective. "These infernal bones don't throw out any heat. I only wish we had some wood."

He might as well have wished for the moon. Wherever Raymond Reynolds got the wood for the trail posts, there was certainly none in sight, for the mountain sides as far as the eye could reach, were

nothing but bare rocks on the lower levels with snow above.

So there was nothing for it but to burn more bones, and the day passed finding them still at it.

No alarm having come from the Indians, nor anything more seen of the gray wolf, they kept right on working after supper, and about nine o'clock Ned's pick struck something soft and yielding. When he drew it out it was yellow with gold.

"Eureka!" shouted the Unknown. "By the Jumping Jeremiah, we get there every time."

"Look out! You've punched a bag!" said Captain Conover. "You don't want to do that. Remember we've got to pack that stuff twenty miles."

"That's what's the matter, and we are willing to pack it two hundred and twenty!" cried the Unknown, throwing up his plug hat and catching it on his head when it came down. "Fire away! Dig her up, boys! Unearth the treasure! Let's know what we've struck and then I'll tell you what to do."

The digging now proceeded more cautiously, and in a moment or two Ned unearthed a grimy bag which was stuffed full of something.

It was not the bag the pick-ax had broken into; that came later; so did a couple of dozen others. All were full of dust and nuggets. They formed a great pile there at the mouth of the hole.

Darkness was falling but the job was down.

Young Klondike had unearthed the buried gold.

CHAPTER VIII.

ADRIFT IN THE ICE.

A QUIET night was passed and a beautiful morning dawned upon the desolate valley.

The boys and the Unknown took turns in watching the gold while Edith slept. Captain Conover tried his hand at watching too, but he found it quite impossible to keep awake, so he rolled himself up in his blankets again and tried it once more in the tent to which the gold had been removed, and thus slept peacefully till morning undisturbed by the gray wolf.

"We are through here now," said Young Klondike, after breakfast. "We want to pull out right away."

"How many trips have we got to make to the tug to get all that gold aboard?" demanded Dick, looking dismally at the bags.

"There's about three thousand pounds weight here, for a guess," said the Unknown.

"We can't possibly carry more than fifty pounds a piece, even if we hang the bags over our shoulders and make an equal balance of it," declared Ned.

"That's what, and I doubt if Edith can carry as much as that," said Dick; but Edith resented the statement at once, declaring that she could carry as much as anybody else.

"Call it so," said the Unknown. "Admit it. That's two hundred and fifty pounds for one journey, and it will take us a day to make it. That means twelve days' work getting the gold aboard the tug."

It was rather a dismal prospect. To walk forty miles a day for twelve consecutive days was in itself a big undertaking. But here were the facts, and there was nothing for it but to face the music. The long and short of the whole matter was, it would probably take the best part of a month to get this great mass of gold which must have taken a long time to dig down to the shore.

Various plans were discussed.

At first it was proposed to leave the Unknown behind to guard the treasure—the detective proposed this himself.

But this meant slower work and great danger for the Unknown, and Ned promptly sat down upon the scheme.

"It won't do at all," he said. "We must keep together whatever happens. Our only safety lies in that."

Then Dick suggested that Jim Leary help them after the first trip which would shorten up the time of course.

"Don't you even think of it!" said the Unknown.

"Not for an instant," added Captain Conover. "Suppose we come down to the shore some fine day and find the tug gone? Stuck up here in the Arctic where no one ever comes! wouldn't that be a sweet prospect? I tell you what it is, Young Klondike, we might as well commit suicide at once."

"No," said the Unknown, "that can't be done; in fact, there is only one thing which can be done, and that's to go right at the job and stick to it until it's finished. How do the provisions stand, Young Klondike? Are we going to have enough to last us out?"

"I reckon we've got enough for a month."

"That ought to fix us. What do you say, cap?"

"There's certainly enough for a month," replied the captain. "My instructions were to lay in enough for two months, and I carried them out to the letter. You can figure for yourself how many days we've been out and that will give you an idea what ought to be left."

"Well, we'll start right along," said Ned, and start they did within half an hour and the long journey was safely accomplished.

They found the tug all right and Jim Leary overjoyed to see them.

It was necessary to take the engineer into their confidence, and the story of the rich find was told.

"Why, you'll never get all that stuff down here," he said. "I can tell you a trick worth two of yours if I don't greatly mistake."

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, then tell it!" cried the Unknown.

"Remember, Leary, you come in for an equal share with the rest of us," said Ned. "If you can devise any way to shorten up this terrible job you can be very sure we won't forget it—speak right out."

"Why, it's no such great secret and I'm sure I don't want any more than my share," said the engineer. "While you were away I did a little exploring on my own account. I ran the Viking further up the bay and struck the mouth of a river. Thought I'd tackle that too, so I ran the tug fifteen miles up the river until I struck rapids and a waterfall and couldn't go any further. Question is how far is the gold from the river. I don't believe it's any great distance from the way you describe the place."

"Then we'll blame soon see!" cried the detective. "Come, I like this idea. Fifteen miles into the interior must mean business. Let's fire up and get out at once."

The day was now pretty well advanced. Ned fully realized that it was going to take two days to make one trip from the tent to the tug and back again.

Personally he had but little hope of getting all the gold over, for he felt sure that the Indians would begin carrying it off as soon as their backs were turned.

So the only hope lay in Jim Leary's scheme, and an immediate start was made for the falls, which they reached about midnight.

During the long journey Young Klondike carefully observed the direction of the river, studying the lay of the land.

He lost his bearings after it grew dark, but he felt sure that the distance had been shortened up very much, providing there was nothing to hinder them from crossing the intervening country.

This, however, could only be decided by making the attempt, and soon after dawn, which was a little after two o'clock in the morning, the start was made.

By his own request Captain Conover was allowed to remain in charge of the tug, and Jim Leary went on the tramp with the rest.

Ned had carefully noted the general position of the tent, or at least, he thought so, and he anticipated about a ten-mile journey over the barren hills.

First of all they had to ascend a high, rocky hill to the left of the rapids below the falls. This meant a climb of fully a thousand feet, and it was such slow work that all were quite discouraged by the time they reached the top.

"There's no fun in this," growled the Unknown. "It's just as steep on the other side, I suppose, and ye gods and little fishes, what's this?"

The Unknown was the first to come out on the top of the rise.

As Ned followed him over the ridge, he saw to his amazement that there was no great descent on the other side. They were standing at the head of a long valley which descended gradually, widening out more and more until it lost itself in the distance, and there, not over a mile away, stood a small white tent beside a creek, but not a soul visible anywhere near it.

"Well, well! We're not alone up here it seems!"

exclaimed Dick, as Ned called his attention to the tent.

"Who can it be?" asked Edith.

"Can't you guess?" chuckled the Unknown.

"I certainly can't. Who can be here? Who can he be? What's he living on? I haven't seen a sign of game since we came here. I can't understand it at all."

The Unknown laughed outright at this.

"And you, Young Klondike!" he said.

"I'm sure I can't imagine who it can be unless it's Dave White and he's stolen our tent."

"Well, it ain't Dave White and he hasn't stolen our tent, and if you can't see through it I ain't going to tell you what I'm thinking of, for I may be wrong, although I don't think I am."

"Well, we'll go down there and have a look," replied Ned, knowing how hopeless it was to think of making the Unknown tell anything he did not want to tell.

But Young Klondike saw through the mystery before they had covered the first half mile.

"Hello! By gracious, I understand it all now!" he exclaimed, stopping short. "It's our tent!"

And so it was, and when they reached it there was everything undisturbed.

Edith could scarcely believe her eyes.

"How in the world is it that old man Reynolds did not tumble to this?" questioned Dick.

"Oh, perhaps he wasn't curious and never went up the hill," replied Ned.

"Or perhaps the river kept full of ice in his time," said Dick.

The bags of gold lay piled up before the tent just where they had left them and not a tool was missing. It was perfectly clear that the Indians had not returned.

"This is a big thing!" cried Young Klondike. "Why, we can easy get the gold over to the tug in one day."

It seemed so then, but going up and down the hill proved to be hard work, and two days were spent in packing the gold over to the tug.

But this was a big improvement on a month, as it would unquestionably have taken to do it the other way.

The worst of the work was now over. The Arctic Trail had been followed to a finish, and the gold lay safely packed away in the cabin of the tug.

There was a big jollification that night on board the Viking, for it was determined not to start until morning.

Captain Conover turned to during the afternoon and cooked a splendid supper, feeling that they could afford to be liberal with their provisions now.

Everybody was in high spirits, and the Indians were forgotten.

After supper Ned picked the banjo and Edith sang, and the Unknown told marvelous stories of adventure in all parts of the world, and Captain Con-

over told whaling stories. Altogether it was a jolly good time for all.

"We'll start at daybreak," said the captain. "You needn't any of you get up. Jim and I will attend to everything. The passengers are entitled to one good night's sleep."

But Ned did not seem able to sleep well that night.

He put in a couple of hours when he first lay down, and woke up about one o'clock and couldn't get to sleep again.

As he lay there in the bunk listening, he could hear Captain Conover, as he supposed, moving about the deck, and at last the cabin door was softly opened and someone looked in.

Ned raised up suddenly just in time to catch sight of a hairy face, and his heart almost ceased to beat for he saw staring at him the old gray wolf.

Slam went the door and hurried footsteps were heard on deck.

"Dick! Dick! Zed!" shouted Young Klondike, seizing his rifle and springing out of the bunk.

Dick was up almost on the instant and the Unknown came tumbling out of the bunk with his tall hat on, which made it look as though he had been sleeping in it.

"What's the row?" he cried, taking his rifle from a corner and rushing after Dick.

They found Ned running around the deck looking for the gray wolf, as he explained, but the strange creature was not to be found on the tug nor to be seen on the shore.

"Pshaw! You've been dreaming, dear boy," said the detective.

"Not a bit of it," replied Ned. "What I saw I saw. Where's the captain? Where's Jim Leary? I'm afraid we are in trouble here?"

But it was nothing of the sort.

Captain Conover was found asleep in his bunk, and Jim Leary having got his fires up had dropped off in the engine-room.

Neither had seen anything nor heard anything.

Then the tug was searched from end to end without any discovery being made.

"It beats the band where he can have gone," said Dick. "I'm sure from the way you jumped, Ned, there wasn't time for him to hide on shore."

"Well, now look here," said the captain, "I don't know what to say about this. I believe now that it is Dave White, and I believe his scheme was to let us load on the gold and then try to go with us. If there was any earthly place on this tug to hide that we haven't looked into, I should say he was here."

These remarks made Young Klondike suggest that they look again, and they did it, going over every inch of the ground thoroughly but without result.

"We may as well start along," said the captain. "We're all up and dressed but Miss Edith, and it's going to be daylight in a few moments. Let's go now."

Nobody objected, and in a few moments the tug started down the river.

The Unknown went into the wheel-house with Captain Conover. Ned and Dick sat in the stern and had a long talk about their plans.

Long before the tug reached the mouth of the river Edith, aroused by the motion, came on deck and was not a little surprised to learn what had occurred.

"Are you going to strike right out into the sand, or shall we keep in shore until we are further down, cap?" asked Ned, as all three walked along to the wheel-house a little later on.

"Boys," said the captain, gravely, "I don't know what we shall do. Fact is, I don't like this wind."

"What's the matter with the wind?" asked Ned. "It seems to be blowing good and strong, and what's more it's blowing our way and ought to help us along."

"Ah, Young Klondike, it will help something else along, too."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean the ice. There's lots of it up at the head of the sound; if we should happen to get nipped in it and blown out to sea it would be a bad job."

"We are most to the sound now, ain't we?" asked the Unknown.

"That's what we are. When we round that bluff yonder we shall see it, and unless I'm mightily mistaken we shall see ice."

The captain's gloomy prognostications made everyone feel uneasy, and all watched in silence as the Viking went around the bluff.

"The ice!" cried Ned suddenly, as he caught a view of the sound.

"That's what," said the Unknown. "Cap was right."

There was the ice, sure enough.

As far as the eye could reach the fields of glittering white cakes stretched seaward, and there was no end to it visible the other way up the bay.

"We are in for it," said Captain Conover, quietly. "I foresaw this."

"If you'll tell us what to do we'd like it better," said Ned.

"See that narrow rim of water along shore, Young Klondike?"

"Of course I do. It's the only thing that gives me hope."

"Well, there's just one of two things to do; we can take our chances of cutting in ahead of the ice, or we can anchor and wait for the wind to change."

"Any danger of the ice closing in on us and throwing us up on the rocks?" asked the Unknown.

"Every danger, if we take to the rim," replied the captain, "but then we might make a go of it and cut in ahead; once we did that we could hold our own at least, and perhaps gain on the floe."

"By all means try it," said Ned. "Anything is better than to think of anchoring now."

"All I want is orders," said Captain Conover, and he drove the Viking ahead at full speed, running in between the ice and the rocky shore.

But before they had gone half way to their old anchorage the ice began closing in around them.

There was no open water ahead now and to think of returning to the river was useless.

Looking back Young Klondike could see that the ice had blown in against the rocks and the rim was obliterated.

All the open water left was a stretch of a few hundred yards in length and not over twenty feet in width.

"We're stuck!" said Dick, dolefully.

Captain Conover rang his bell, and the tug stopped.

"Do you give it up?" asked the Unknown.

"I've got to," was the gloomy reply. "We can't go forward and we can't go back."

And the floe closed in on them as they lay there.

In a few moments the glittering cakes were around them—the Viking was adrift in the ice.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW THE GRAY WOLF JUMPED ON THE ICE.

FOR a little while all hands silently watched the progress of events.

It soon became apparent that the tug was in the greatest danger.

Moved by the strong ebb tide and hurried forward by the wind, the big ice cakes crunched and ground against her sides, threatening every moment to crush the frail craft to atoms, and yet all Young Klondike could do was to stand and watch it. He was powerless to make a move.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah! let's have dinner!" exclaimed the Unknown, passing out of the wheel-house. "I ain't going to worry about this thing. We are in it, and we can't get out of it, so what's the use of worrying? I say none at all!"

It was rather early for dinner, but with the Unknown determined to do a thing, it was usually done.

He went about cooking the dinner himself and soon had it on the table, and they sat over it an unusual time, for there was nothing else to do.

When Ned relieved Captain Conover at the wheel at last, and Dick went into the engine-room to let Jim Leary go to the table, the Viking had worked a long way out from the shore, and was now firmly locked in the ice floe about the middle of Kotzebue Sound.

Young Klondike saw at a glance that the chances of getting out of their predicament until the wind died down were very slim, and even then there was no certainty that the ice would break up right away.

There was no change at sundown, except that it had clouded over and looked like a storm.

"If we are caught in a blizzard here Heaven help us," remarked Captain Conover. "I'm sure I don't know what the end of it will be, but I should say that there was scarcely a doubt that it would blow us out to sea."

"And that would be a good thing, for then the ice would break up and let us out," said Dick.

"It won't break up as long as this wind holds," remarked the Unknown. "It blows the cakes together and keeps the field one solid mass. I don't doubt there's going to be a storm, and I don't look for any change until it's over. One thing, though, we've got rid of the gray wolf and the Indians. I reckon Mr. Dave White wishes he'd never left the tug."

Certainly if the missing sailor was among the Indians on the desolate shore of Kotzebue Sound he could hardly hope ever to see civilized parts again.

Years might elapse before a ship visited that coast and the chances of any one penetrating to the valley were more remote still.

Young Klondike was resolved that he would never do it.

Golden & Luckey were the owners of enough good mines without attempting to work one, be it ever so rich, in this desolate region.

And yet there were millions in sight in those drifts dug by old Raymond Reynolds and they are there still.

Such is the wonderful richness of the great gold deposit in Alaska. In no part of the known world is the precious metal so widely distributed and in such quantities, and yet there is next to no chance to work many of the richest mines except for a few short weeks in the summer season.

How Reynolds ever managed to put in a winter in that valley was something Young Klondike could not understand, nor was the mystery ever solved.

But to return to our story.

That night it snowed as Young Klondike had not seen it snow since the night old Raymond Reynolds died.

It began shortly after twelve, and by half-past the air was just one mass of snow, which swept over the tug with fearful velocity, burying everything which came in its way.

There was no sleep for any one, the situation was altogether too serious.

Young Klondike and the Unknown went into the wheel-house with Captain Conover, but Dick stayed in the cabin with Edith.

"This ain't going to be a long storm," remarked the master of the Viking, as Ned stood peering through the glass, something which did no good at all, for he could not see a thing.

"How do you know?" asked the detective.

"Oh, I'm sure of it. I judge by the way the snow comes down, by the wind and various other things."

"Do you pass for a weather prophet when you are home?" asked the detective, half sneeringly it sounded, although perhaps, he did not intend it that way.

"I pass for a navigator among those who know me," replied the captain quietly, "and I think I may say I understand my business, too."

"I suppose you are right; I'm willing to admit it. Whereabouts are we now, cap?"

"Probably at the mouth of Kotzebue Sound. We may be out at sea, for all I can tell. If we ain't we will be in a short time."

"We can't see beyond the length of our nose," said Ned. "If there had been the least chance to do the lookout act, I should have been outside doing it, but there ain't. We might run into any old thing, for all we could do to hinder it. Thunder! That was a big one. Brace up, Zed! The old Viking ain't going over this time, although it came precious near it, I will admit."

This sort of thing was going on all the time. A huge cake of ice had been forced against the tug. It rose above its fellows, grinding against the timber with terrible force, almost threatening their safety for a moment and sending the tug far over on its side.

"Is there any danger?" shouted Dick, opening the cabin door.

"Not a bit!" bawled Ned, catching the sound and opening the door of the wheel-house to reply.

As he did so, he caught sight of a huge black mass ahead of them in the darkness. It almost made his heart stand still.

"A ship! A ship!" he shouted. "Jam your helm hard-a-port!"

"A ship? Nonsense! It can't be!" roared the captain, but he twisted his wheel just the same and tried to force the Viking around, but the move was made too late.

Suddenly the tug struck with a great force as if it had struck a rock.

It glanced off and moved through the grinding ice past the obstruction.

Everybody ran out on deck except Captain Conover, who had presence of mind to ring the starting bell as he twisted his wheel.

Probably it was this which saved the Viking from destruction.

She glided past the ship and forced her way through the ice beyond.

Not a light was shown, not a voice heard.

Young Klondike could see the towering masts and the snow covered rigging, but no human being appeared on deck.

"A tight squeak. Ye gods and little fishes, a tight squeak!" cried the Unknown.

"Ship ahoy! Hello on board there!" roared Captain Conover, but no answer came back.

A moment more and the ship had vanished in the darkness, leaving the tug to find her way through the ice.

Captain Conover rang the bell to stop, for there was momentary danger that the propeller would lose a blade.

"We can't keep this up," he said, "our only hope of escape lies in keeping the Viking in good condition until the ice breaks up."

Edith, who had come forward with Dick, asked about the ship.

"Yes, what is she, cap?" added Ned. "What in the world brought such a craft as that up here?"

"She's an old abandoned whaler beyond all doubt," replied Captain Conover. "Didn't you see the big works on deck?"

"No; can't say I did."

"That's because you're no navigator. I've got eyes like a cat. I saw them plain enough."

"How long do you suppose she's been abandoned?"

"Hard to say. Probably she's one of last year's fleet. Hundreds of whalers come up here, you know. It's a very common thing for them to get nipped in the ice."

"But why abandoned?"

"Perhaps she's leaky. Perhaps the crew starved to death. You can imagine anything, but that's what she is. I've known water-logged ships to keep afloat for months. Take an old whaler whose timbers are thoroughly saturated with oil, and it's all you can do to sink her. All I hope is she won't run across our path again."

There was no thought of sleeping that night, and the remaining hours of darkness passed without adventure.

At five o'clock it stopped snowing and grew suddenly warmer, but now another trouble overtook the Viking.

Evidently it had rained further out at sea, for the fog came rolling in upon them, and it grew so thick that they could scarcely see the length of the tug.

Edith bustled about and got a good breakfast together.

"We are lost in a sea of ice," declared Ned, when he sat down to the table, "and according to Cap Conover this state of things is liable to hold for a week."

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, there's a pleasant prospect for you," spoke up the Unknown. "Come on, Young Klondike, tell us something else that's nice."

"We may as well face the music."

"You bet we've got to," said Dick. "Never mind. We can stand it a month, and don't you forget it. As long as the ice don't grind us to pieces we stand a fairly good chance of getting out alive."

After breakfast all went on deck.

Ned took the wheel and Dick went into the engine room to relieve the captain and engineer.

It was decidedly warm, so much so that Ned let down the windows. Not that this helped him to see any. There was nothing to be seen but the everlasting fog.

"I don't believe this is going to hold any great length of time," said the Unknown. "That's the east. You can see the sun trying to struggle through the fog. I believe it will be out before long."

"Then here's one who will be glad to see it," replied Ned. "How's the wind?"

"East, what there is of it."

"That's blowing in the right direction."

"To take us out to see, yes."

"Ain't that what we want?"

"Oh, I suppose so, if we don't go too far."

"I suppose we are on the move all the time. It is hard to realize it, though. Seems to me as though we were standing still."

"We are probably moving, and if the tide is on the ebb, moving rapidly."

"And we'll go back on the flood?"

"I presume so. It depends upon the wind. I don't know enough about this sort of business to speak definitely."

"I wish we could make a move," said Ned, after a little, "but I suppose it would be madness to start up now."

"If you want a broken propeller it would be a sure way to get one. Captain Conover is very positive about that."

"Then for goodness sake don't attempt it," said Edith. "To float round here helpless would be awful. I suppose we might go for six months and not meet a ship."

"By the Jumping Jeremiah! Speaking of ships, what's that?" cried the Unknown, suddenly pointing off into the fog.

"What's what?" demanded Ned.

"That black thing—don't you see, there behind us?"

The Unknown had been looking back and Ned stepped out of the pilot-house to have a look too.

"There's certainly something there!" he cried.

"Can it be the old whaler again?"

And as he looked the fog lifted.

It was a wonderful sight to see the big ship suddenly come into view in that halo of mist.

But it was not the whaler.

The deck was crowded with men who sent up a wild shout and waved their hats at the tug.

"Ship ahoy there! Ahoy!" roared Young Klondike, and the captain and engineer came running out of the cabin just in time to see something else more startling than the ship.

It was the old gray wolf!

How he came there no one could imagine nor did they ever solve the mystery, but there he was standing erect near the stern rail.

Without turning his face he leaped overboard and started to run over the snow-covered ice like a man.

CHAPTER X.

WHERE IS THE SHIP?

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, my man!" cried the Unknown. "I'll have him if I perish in the attempt!"

It was just like the Unknown. When he started to do a thing he usually did it.

He had started in to capture the gray wolf now and he ran to the stern like lightning and sprang off upon the ice.

But the detective had made a great mistake. He thought because the ice held up the gray wolf that it would hold up him.

Nothing of the sort.

The man in the wolf skin, be he who he might, was evidently a light weight. The ice was not the solid mass it looked to be, but was broken up into cakes imperfectly frozen together.

They yielded beneath the weight of the gray wolf, but they held him up as he ran.

With the Unknown it was different. He had not gone ten steps before down he went into the icy water.

Edith screamed, and all rushed to the stern.

"Help, help!" shouted the Unknown, his arms waving wildly and his tall hat bobbing up and down among the ice.

The gray wolf looked back, disclosing a man's face under the wolf's head, as Young Klondike, quick to respond to the appeal, sprang over the rail on to the ice.

Ned was light and wiry, and well able to hold his position on the floe.

He could hear the shouts of the sailors on the ship as he leaped from cake to cake, and then came Dick's voice, crying:

"Look out for yourself, Ned! Here's a rope!"

Dick seized the first coil of rope he could lay his hands on, and whirling it about his head, let fly.

Luckily it fell right in front of Ned, who stooped, seized it, and flung it to the Unknown, who was clutching desperately at the ice.

The detective was very cool.

"I'm all right. Don't you fret about me, dear boy!" he cried, and immediately began to adjust the rope under his arms.

"Look at the wolf! Look at the wolf!" cried Edith, and Ned saw the strange being suddenly lose his footing, slip among the ice cakes, and disappear with an awful yell.

But this was all he saw, for at the same instant the fog shut down upon them again.

The ship vanished—the place where the gray wolf disappeared was seen no more. Even the tug was blotted out, although Young Klondike could still hear the voices of his friends calling. All he could see was the Unknown.

Cool as a cucumber? Well, that well-worn phrase scarcely expresses the way the Unknown took this, the most trying situation of all.

"Keep still, Young Klondike!" he cried. "Keep a stiff upper lip and keep hold of the rope. We may die, but we'll die fighting. Now if you dare, pull me up."

The ice seemed comparatively solid under Ned's feet, and he ventured to make the attempt.

To be sure, the ice cake upon which he stood sank

low down in the water, but it did not give way altogether.

Little by little he managed to pull the Unknown out upon another cake, where he stood trembling like a leaf.

"Come here!" cried Ned. "Walk easy now! Are you cold? Don't be worried. It will bear you if you don't try to go too fast."

"Now, now, don't you fret about me, Young Klondike. I'm a-coming on all right. Ye gods and little fishes! Did you see him? It was Mike Dresser! Any one could recognize him, now that his beard has begun to grow again. Where in the world did he hide on the tug?"

"I just caught a glimpse of the face, but I couldn't be sure," replied Ned.

Toot, toot, toot!

The Viking's whistle was blowing, and they could hear the shouts of the men on the ship.

"Ned, Ned, Ned!" came Dick's voice, rising above the rest.

"All right! I'm here safe with Zed! Keep on blowing!" Young Klondike shouted back.

Meanwhile the Unknown was picking his way gingerly over the ice toward Ned, who helped by keeping the rope taut.

The Viking's whistle kept up a constant tooting and they followed the sound, coming in sight of the tug a moment later to their unspeakable relief.

Everybody set up a shout and there were plenty of helping hands ready to assist them into the tug.

"Did you see his face? Did you see it?" cried Dick and Edith in one breath.

"Why of course we did," replied the detective.

"Mike Dresser," said Dick.

"You bet," answered Ned. "He's a goner now. Did you see him sink?"

"I call him Dave White, and I'll be blamed if I can tell where he hid himself, but I say, let him go," put in Captain Conover. "Where's the ship? We want to tie to her. Get below and change your clothes, you fellows. The ice seems to be breaking up and broken propeller or no broken propeller, I'm going to make a start."

Captain Conover ran into the wheel-house and gave Jim Leary the bell. Then he began to work the tug around so as to head her toward the ship.

Ned and the Unknown ran into the cabin and stripped, rubbed themselves down with towels and put on dry clothes.

"Well, what's the word?" demanded the detective, when he came out again. "I don't hear those fellows hollering now."

It was as still as death, and the fog seemed thicker than ever.

The Viking was slowly grinding her way through the ice, Captain Conover believing that he was working toward the ship. But was he?

It seemed extremely doubtful.

No man living could tell where he was going in that fog.

The whistle tooted again and again as they moved on, but no answer came.

When Young Klondike appeared on deck, the case seemed hopeless.

It was the same old question.

"Where is the ship?"

CHAPTER XI.

THE WRECK OF THE VIKING.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, it's no use talking, we're going dead wrong!" exclaimed the Unknown, after Captain Conover had wasted some twenty minutes groping his way around through the fog.

"I gave it up some time ago," replied Edith. "I never expect to see that ship again."

"I think myself it's mighty doubtful if we do," said Ned, "but of course there is no telling. Anyhow it seems to me as though we ought not to take any more chances on breaking our propeller. It's all up with us if we do."

"Are you talking about me, boys?" called Captain Conover, looking out of the wheel-house.

"Not exactly. We are discussing our chances," said Ned. "Don't you think we ought to stop?"

"Might as well. It ain't any use to keep on. We are nowhere near the ship."

"That's what! Which direction are we running in, anyhow?"

"About south-east."

"Will that take us clear of Kotzebue Sound if we keep it up?"

"I suppose so; can't tell though. You see I don't know how far we have drifted."

"Do you see any chance of the fog lifting?" asked Dick.

"Well," said the captain, "it don't look so much like it now as it did. Still you can't tell. It may lift any moment. I think the wind is slowly shifting west; that will soon dissipate it. You may see it go in a moment, or it may hold on all day. But come! what's the verdict? Shall we stop?"

"What do you say?" asked Ned.

"I think we don't have to. We seem to be going on all right. I think the ice is rotting below and breaking up fast. I don't see the risk to the propeller that I did."

"Then, by all means, let's turn round and go on," said Ned, "but I trust to you to stop the instant you think there is the least danger."

The captain made the turn and struck off to the south-west.

This course continued was sure to carry them clear of the ice sooner than any other, he declared.

But it was not written in the book of fate that they should see the Viking get clear of the ice by taking that direction, or any other to which the compass pointed.

Before fifteen minutes had passed, Ned, who was sitting in the cabin talking with Dick, was startled by a tremendous shock, which almost threw him on the floor.

"What in the world has happened now?" cried Dick, springing up and making a rush for the door.

Young Klondike followed him. Edith was calling, the Unknown was shouting, there in front of them loomed a big ship, and the tug seemed fastened to it, and was settling in the water fast.

"The Viking's a goner!" cried Captain Conover, jumping out of the wheel-house. "I've done it now, boys! Here we are, against the old whaler hard and fast with her bow anchor driven through our timbers."

What had happened it took just about one minute to explain.

Groping his way in the fog, Captain Conover had run the tug against the old derelict, striking the bow anchor, which hung partly under water. The fluke of the anchor had torn away the timbers on the star-board bow, and the tug was rapidly filling.

There was but one thing to do, and that was to get on board the old whaler.

Captain Conover examined the break as well as he could, and declared that there was no time to be lost.

"Ye gods and little fishes! Is it so?" groaned the Unknown. "Have we gone through all this to see over half a million in gold drop to the bottom of Kotzebue Sound in the end?"

"Brace up! No grunting!" cried Ned. "We may get some of the bags off on the whaler; at any rate, I'm going to try."

"Cap, the water is coming into the engine-room!" called Leary, looking out of his door. "We'd better make a move."

"Time!" said the captain, coolly. "I'm doing my best."

"What he was doing was tying a slip noose in a coil of rope, the same which had been thrown to Ned.

He had it ready in a moment and flung it up on the deck of the whaler. It caught on something over the rail—the captain seemed to know just what he was doing—and he pulled it taut, and giving the other end to the Unknown to hold went up hand over hand.

"Good enough! Here's a ladder!" he cried. "We'll fix you all!"

He made the ladder fast and let it down over the side of the ship. It was high time if they wished to save any of the gold, for the tug was sinking fast.

Ned helped Edith up and Dick followed.

"Go on," said Captain Conover, but Ned wouldn't.

"No, I'll stay and pass up the gold," he said. "We want to save all we can. Go on yourself, and lend me a hand."

"I'll stay with you, boss," said Leary. "I'm not afraid."

But Ned wouldn't hear to that, either.

"No, no," he declared. "I'm taking all the chances," and he began moving the gold bags forward.

When he had accumulated a number he passed them up to Leary, who clung to the foot of the ladder and passed them on to Captain Conover further up, and so on to the Unknown on the deck.

In a few moments the supply moved forward was exhausted and Ned went back for more.

"Look out for yourself!" shouted the captain. "She's away down in the water now!"

Although he was wading through water up to his ankles, Ned scarcely heeded the warning, he was so intent on saving more of the gold.

All at once Edith gave a fearful cry and everyone stood staring at where the tug had been.

Suddenly it sank out of sight and the fog and ice closed around them.

"Ned! Ned!" screamed Edith, but there was no answer save the grinding of the ice against the old whaler's hull.

CHAPTER XII.

THE END OF THE MAN-WOLF AND THE STORY OF YOUNG KLONDIKE'S ARCTIC TRAIL.

"GONE!" cried Captain Conover. "Well, well, well!"

"You are alluding to the gold," said the Unknown, bitterly. "Let me tell you I'd cheerfully pitch what that poor boy saved overboard to have him back again."

And the Unknown turned away with tears in his eyes, passing Edith, who stood by the rail weeping softly.

Dick said nothing. His grief was too great for tears. He had walked to the stern of the old whaler, and stood looking off gloomily into the bay.

This was after every effort had been made to learn Young Klondike's fate.

It all went for nothing. The tug had gone down so suddenly that there seemed no possible chance that Ned could have survived.

"Now come, boss, I don't want you to think that I am heartless," said Captain Conover, "for I'm nothing of the sort. It's no use saying anything in a case like this, though. Only thing is to work and that's what I propose to do."

Captain Conover went about it quietly, and Dick took hold and helped him.

First of all they made a careful survey of the old derelict which proved to be the J. H. Swan, of San Francisco.

She appeared to have been abandoned suddenly and that after a long cruise. There were a great many barrels of oil in the hold, and also a great many barrels that were empty.

"It was these which kept her up," the captain declared. He tried her pumps, and found that she carried but little water. It seemed hardly likely that she had been abandoned on account of leakage, and it was difficult to understand what the cause could have been. Cabin, galley, fo'castle, everything showed that her crew had taken a hasty departure, but the reason seemed destined to remain forever a mystery of the sea.

While the captain and Ned were thus engaged, the wind suddenly shifted west and began to blow strong, and after a few moments the fog cleared away.

The old Swan was out of sight of land, with the ice floe moving rapidly to the eastward, breaking into thousands of pieces as it went.

This was hopeful, for in a few moments they would be in clear water, but what stirred them most was the sight of a ship, under full sail, moving rapidly toward them through the parting ice.

"We are saved—we are saved!" shouted the Unknown. "Oh, if poor Ned were only in the same boat!"

Unknown to the Unknown, this remark carried a double meaning, for at that very moment Young Klondike was in a boat, and, although they could not see it, that boat lay between the old Swan and the coming ship.

Not dead—not a bit of it! Ned Golden sat there bending over a strange figure, which lay stretched at his feet battling for life.

It was only a man lying on a wet wolf skin cut loose from his body, around which it had been securely tied with cords.

Young Klondike's story may be told in a few brief words.

He sank with the tug, being in the cabin at the time, but he would not have been Young Klondike if he had allowed a little thing like that to disturb him a bit.

Ned had no more idea of drowning than he had of flying. He made one rush out of the cabin and sprang into the water, and in a moment was on the surface again enveloped in the fog.

To his utter surprise he rose alongside a small boat in which there was apparently nobody.

Ned seized the boat and pulled himself in.

Then his surprise was doubled, for there lay the man, Mike Dresser, alias Dave White, alias the man-wolf.

Apparently he was in a dying condition; the wolf skin was covered with blood, which seemed to come from a wound around the heart.

Someone was shouting. He could hear his name called again and again.

Ned shouted back, but the rising wind carried his words away; his answering cry never reached the Swan, and there seemed just as little chance of his ever reaching her, for there were no oars in the boat.

And from that time until the moment of the clearing of the fog Young Klondike remained watching the wolf in silence, for the man was past speaking in

seemed, and lay there faintly breathing, staring at Ned through half closed eyes.

When the fog lifted Ned saw the Swan and then turning his head saw the ship.

He could see the men moving about on the deck of the latter, but could not make out any one on the deck of the Swan—she was too far away.

"If I could only set a signal," he thought; "if I could only do something to let them know that I am here there would be nothing to worry about, but all the same they seem to be coming my way."

"Young Klondike! Young Klondike!"

The man-wolf was speaking. His voice was so faint that Ned could scarcely distinguish the words; he bent over him, saying:

"Well, my poor friend, so you still live?"

"I'm no friend of yours," was the low reply. "I never was a true friend to any man, least of all to myself. Listen to me, Young Klondike. I was mad. I've been mad for years, but I'm sane now that death is upon me. Do you know my name?"

"Mike Dresser?" suggested Ned.

"Not at all. I am Al Evans, old Reynolds' partner. I am the man who called himself Mike Dresser, though, but you knew me best as Dave White. Oh, I tell you there's method in my madness; the spells come and go. I was mad when I left the Viking and joined the Indians—fellows I knew well once in the days when Raymond Reynolds and I worked that claim—but knew what I was doing all the time. I knew it the night I attacked Cap Conover—I wish I'd killed the old snoozer—and when I looked in on you with my wolf skin on, and then hid in the hold of the tug. I let you load that gold. I wanted my chance. I was mad when I jumped overboard. I thought the ship was close to us, and that I could reach it. You know what happened, but you don't know that they sent a boat out after me and got me, and that I, in a mad fit, attacked those two sailors and threw them overboard. Ha, ha, ha!"

He laughed wildly and raised himself in the boat, displaying more strength than Ned supposed he possessed.

"I did 'em! I did 'em both!" he cried, "and I had a right to, for they did me. I—hark! They are calling! Don't you hear them, Young Klondike? Keep the gold—I'm going! Good-by!"

Suddenly and without other warning the man-wolf sprang up and jumped into the water, which closed over him on the instant and he was never seen again.

Not seen by Young Klondike who, dumb with horror, watched for his reappearance in vain; not seen by the sailors on the whaler Sea Gull, which presently rescued Young Klondike from his perilous position; not seen by Dick, Edith or the Unknown, who with Captain Conover and Jim Leary joined Young Klondike on the Sea Gull's deck later on.

It was the end of the man-wolf, and it is also the end of our story of Young Klondike's Arctic Trail, for there were no more adventures to happen to our

gold hunters before the Sea Gull landed them at St. Michaels a few days later, to which port she went straight with the old Swan in tow.

A hundred and twenty thousand dollars was what Young Klondike saved from the wreck of the Viking.

In his usual liberal style, Ned divided the odd change—we mean the twenty thousand—among the sailors of the Sea Gull, and then all returned to Dawson City by the first boat up the Yukon.

A hundred thousand dollars divided among six was

certainly something apiece, but to Golden & Luckey the small sum was scarcely worthy of consideration, and they went right to work at their old business of gold hunting again.

It is a life full of adventure, this gold hunting, and Young Klondike had his share of it. For other and more startling adventures in which all our friends figured, we refer the reader to the next story of this series, entitled

"YOUNG KLONDIKE'S NEW BONANZA; OR, THE GOLD DIGGERS OF FRENCH GULCH."

[THE END.]

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